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ISSUE 1506 / 28 MARCH 2022

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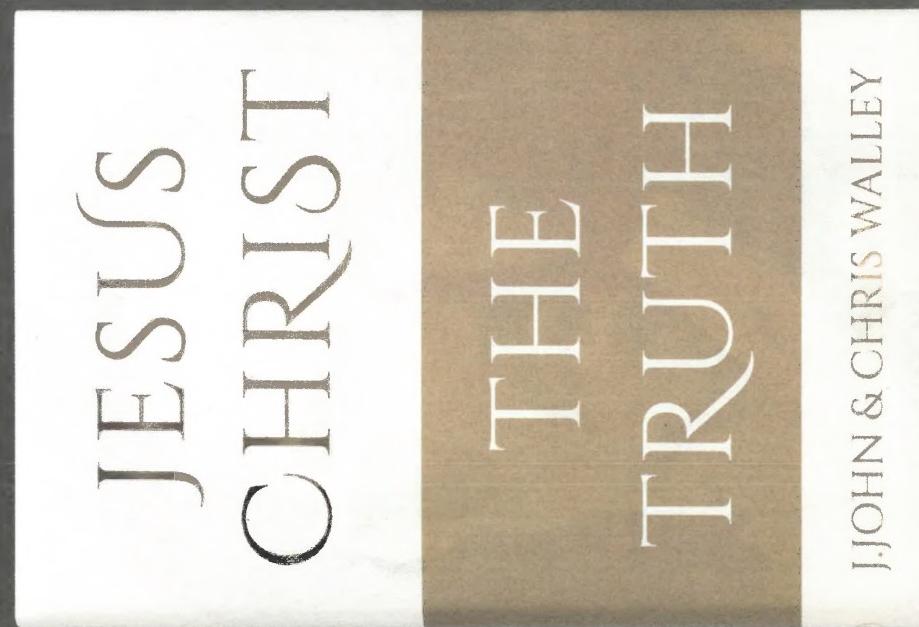
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A guide through the week's highlights with our Big Issue critics

HOW THE BIG ISSUE WORKS

Our vendors buy magazines for £1.50 and sell them for £3, keeping the proceeds and working their way out of poverty.

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EVERY COPY BOUGHT MAKES A DIFFERENCE.
IT'S A HAND UP, NOT A HANDOUT.



MY PITCH

Monica

After being on her pitch in Farnham for eight years, Monica has a core of loyal and kind customers. Page 46.

6-765-7772
California Table Tennis



Net gains



Fifty years ago, China was cut off from the world, politically and economically. It took the power of the ping-pong ball to open up diplomatic relations.

In April 1971, the US table tennis team became the first US delegation to visit Beijing in over 20 years, paving the way for President Nixon's visit in February 1972.

To celebrate the 50th anniversary of ping-pong diplomacy's smashing success, a 'friendship match' was held in Los Angeles last week.

Dell Sweetris, who played on Team USA when China made their first visit in 1972, partnered with his wife Connie to take on Zhang Ping, Chinese Consul General in LA, and Virginia Sung, CEO of the United States Table Tennis Association.

The result didn't matter, everyone was a winner. As Zhang Ping said, "Today the big ball of China-US relations still needs the force of many small balls, like the ping-pong ball to move it forward. We should not use competition to define China-US relations; neither shall we let competition dominate the future of our relationship. We should make friendship a tenacious bond linking our two peoples."

Meanwhile, President Biden has been working hard to strengthen the international relations first forged at the ping-pong table, trying to get Chinese President Xi to distance his country from Russia as the brutal invasion of Ukraine continues.

THE DISPATCH

News, views & miscellany

PROTEST

THE TOP 5 STORIES ON BIGISSUE.COM LAST WEEK

1. The government knew of P&Q Ferries mass sackings the day before but didn't tell anyone

2. Transnistria: the country that doesn't exist but could shape the future of Russia and Europe

3. Just Stop Oil: who are the protesters and why do they keep looking themselves to goalposts?

4. The diary of one Ukrainian refugee's two-week journey to the UK

5. Diane Abbott demands meeting with Hackney police after Black schoolgirl strip searched

LIVE MUSIC

Muse to play show in support of The Big Issue

Global rock titans Muse are set to play a landmark show in support of The Big Issue on May 10, we can exclusively reveal. The band will play London's Eventim Apollo with support from Razorlight.

Muse will also play on May 9 at the same venue in a show fundraising for War Child, to help those affected by the war in Ukraine and other conflict zones, and for Médecins Sans Frontières for its ongoing work in Ukraine and around the world.

This will be the band's first live performances in a year. Their last global tour was in 2019.

Tickets for the shows go on sale at 10am on Wednesday March 30.

"We're delighted to have the opportunity to work with Muse and Razorlight for this one-off event that helps to mark The Big Issue's 30th anniversary," said Russell Blackman, MD of Commercial for The Big Issue. "It is an event that will raise vital income so that we can continue to support the most marginalised in society through our front-line services, across the UK."

James Kliffen, Head of Fundraising at Médecins Sans Frontières said, "Muse's support couldn't have come at a more crucial time as our staff around the world face unprecedented challenges. In half a century of providing emergency aid, the last two years have

been by far the most challenging."

Rob Williams, CEO of War Child, added, "There were 10.7 million children in Ukraine on February 23, the day before the invasion. At least four million of those are now sleeping wherever they can find shelter either in bunkers, in the countryside, in transit or in another country altogether.

"The psycho-social impact of this war will affect an entire generation of children and there will be acutely vulnerable children who need carefully managed support to stay safe and navigate this upheaval. War Child is specifically designed to provide this kind of help. The money raised by Muse will make sure that we can respond quickly to children who need support."

Tickets will be on sale through ticketmaster.co.uk



A shocking report revealing a 15-year-old Black girl was strip-searched by police at school in London while on her period sparked outrage across society this month.

Teachers called the Met after claiming the student smelled of cannabis. She was dragged out of an exam for the search, which was undertaken with no supervision and without alerting the girl's family. No drugs were found, and the girl, identified only as Child Q, is still suffering the impacts of the trauma two years on.

The case is the latest in a long line of scandals to emerge from the Met Police in recent years, and the culture within the force is once again coming under intense scrutiny.

Hundreds of people turned out in Hackney, where the incident took place, to call for police to be removed from all schools.

Days after that protest, the Met was branded "not fit for purpose" when it comes to tackling corruption within its ranks. The report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) found the force had, in the last two years, recruited people with criminal connections and more than 100 people who have committed offences.



▼ Catch Muse live at Eventim Apollo, raising money to help the most vulnerable

PHOTO: NICK FANCHEUR/ROBBIE JAY BARRETT, AMA/GETTY IMAGES

CLIMATE PROTEST

I felt like the most hated man on the planet' says climate activist who stopped Premier League match

● The activist who brought a Premier League match to a shuddering halt by locking himself to a goalpost told The Big Issue that stopping the match was "without a doubt the scariest thing I've ever done in my life".

Viewers on Amazon Prime, along with tens of thousands inside Everton's Goodison Park, saw student Louis McKechnie, a member of Just Stop Oil, run onto the pitch, lock himself to a goalpost and cause a lengthy delay to the game while stewards attempted to free him with bolt cutters.

McKechnie, a 21-year-old mechanical engineering student, who has previously been jailed and was also hit by motorists while protesting with Insulate Britain, told The Big Issue, "Knowing that I'm going to be messing up the day of thousands and thousands of people in that stadium – I really hate inconveniencing people like that, but I'm doing it for them."

"I felt like the most hated man on the planet. But it's not really about how it affects me – if it helps all those people know what's coming, and helps them act to protect themselves, it doesn't really matter what happens to me."

The protest was one of many attempts to disrupt Premier League matches by Just Stop Oil, a successor group to Insulate Britain that wants an end to new oil projects in the UK. Explicitly focused on young people, it wants the UK to transition to a zero-carbon economy within eight years. While other protesters were thwarted before managing to

were thwarted before managing to

lock on, McKechnie was by far the most successful.

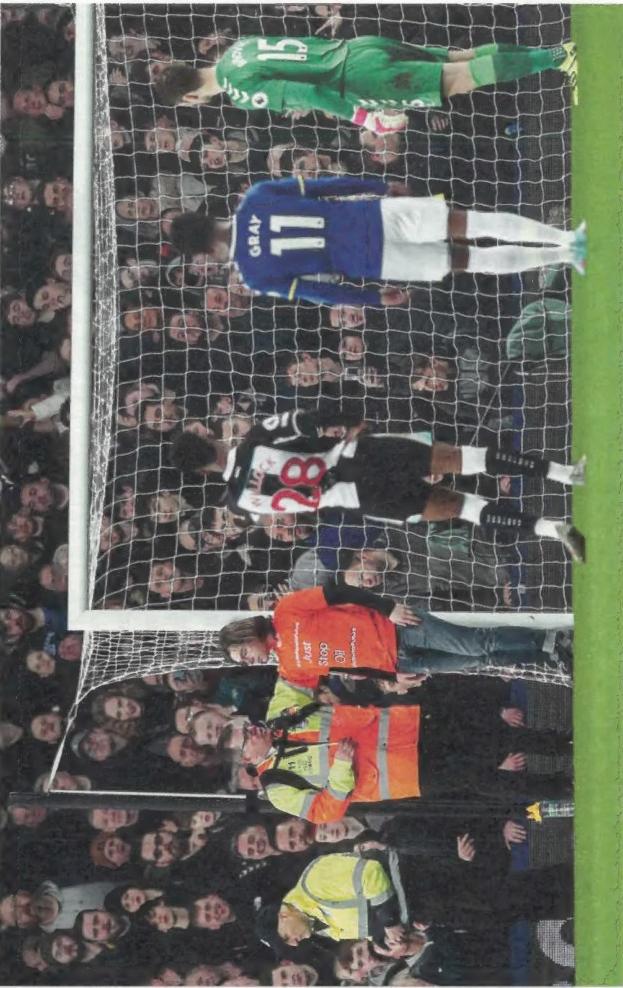
The delay to the match between struggling Everton and Newcastle was so long that some Everton fans saw the positive in it. They credit McKechnie with buying them enough time for a late winner.

"There's so many eyes on you. On the roads with Insulate Britain I got hit a few times by angry motorists, but that's not really as bad as this," McKechnie added.

"With this, going into it, I know there's quite a good chance I get beaten up badly."

McKechnie was arrested and released on bail – after police officers had shown him viral memes of his exploits. He says the group may try other tactics from now on.

"We'll continue if there's energy for it but since I did it, security has been increased 20 times or more," he said.



COST OF LIVING CRISIS

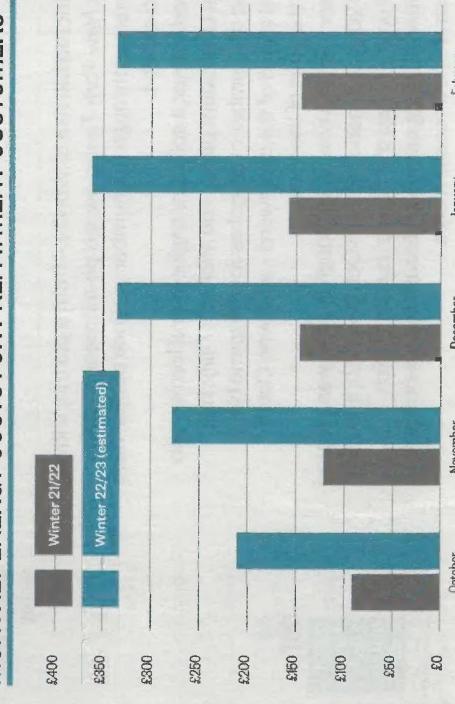
Soaring energy bills will hit those with a prepayment meter more than most

● The energy crisis is going to hit millions of people – but for those who use a prepayment meter (PPM) it's going to hit harder.

Citizens Advice have put together this chart showing the eye-watering impact of the energy price rise on the 4.5 million people who pay for electricity and gas through a PPM, which is often a more expensive way to pay.

In December the average household with a PPM spent £147 on their energy. In December this year the average household on a PPM will be paying * £336* a month.

MONTHLY ENERGY COSTS FOR PREPAYMENT CUSTOMERS



SPRING BUDGET

"OBR gives the Chancellor or a fiscal windfall that he spends on furnishing his credentials as a tax cutter, NOT on prioritising help for low- and middle-income households"



Torsten Bell, Chief Executive of Resolution Foundation, on the missed opportunities to relieve the cost of living crisis in the Spring Statement.

ENERGY PRICES

People are turning to crowdfunding websites to help pay for energy bills

● As James Anderson sat at his desk, a woman walked in with a bag of pound coins and 50 pence pieces. She'd been saving them for a holiday, but Covid meant she wouldn't be able to get away. Instead, she wanted the change she'd scrimped and saved to go towards a family in need.

"I would rather a family wake up in the morning and eat something, than me sit there with a bag of money and wake up on holiday one day," she told Anderson. "That might be the last meal for that parent – I couldn't live with myself."

Anderson, a plumber, runs Depher – a social enterprise based in Burnley – providing heating and plumbing services to those in need, as well as sending money to families for energy bills and food shops. Anderson has now helped 31,000 families across the UK with Depher.

The woman with the bags was an unusual donation – Anderson is more used to money flowing in online. In four years, Depher has raised over £460,000 to fund its operations.

Donations make up 60 per cent of Depher's funding. He's managed to attract £25,000 from Hugh Grant – but the smaller donations mean the most.

“That’s the thing about the British people – the majority who’ve got nothing, or very little, will give you more than what they have,” he told The Big Issue.

Buffeted by the effects of the pandemic and the ramping up of the cost of living, Brits are increasingly turning to fundraising sites like Gofundme to pay for basics.

In the absence of serious government support, and as even Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis admits he’s “out of tools” to help people cope, the avenues for survival are growing ever narrower.

The number of campaigns on Gofundme mentioning “bills” or “heating” increased by 77 per cent, when comparing January–March 2022 to the same period in 2019, according to the site.

A trawl through the site’s pages shows the need – families asking for help with nursery fees while a parent lies in hospital; unemployed people trying to cover their bills; and an appeal for money to pay off rent arrears and keep a home.

► Contact editorial@bigissue.com if you have had to go to public funding sites to help with bills

WORDLE

Why the world went Wordle crazy

● The incredible rise of Wordle – from a partner’s loving gift to a *New York Times*-owned phenomenon – has been charted through the number of times people have tweeted about it.

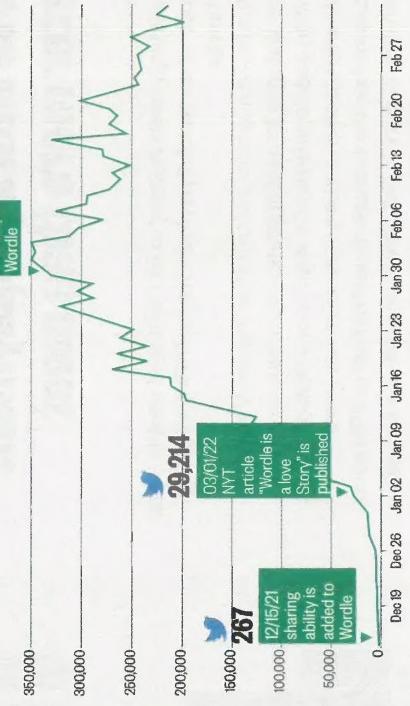
Robert Lesser, a software engineer and former web editor at US student paper *The Michigan Daily*, has revealed the number of searches for the game has stormed ahead of the crossword – and even Covid – since the start of the year.

Lesser explains how even though Wordle was created in June 2021 and made public in October 2021, it didn’t take off until it added the “Share” button in mid-December, allowing people to discuss their successes and frustrations on social media.

And this chart shows that people really like to do that.

WORDLE GOES V | R | A | L

340,221

31/01/23
NYT buys WordleWordle Tweets
per Day

UKRAINE REFUGEE AID

This hotel took in 100 rough sleepers during the pandemic. Now it's welcoming Ukraine refugees

**NATURE
THE RIVERS WILD**

► A new film promises to show the world's rivers as they've never been seen before.

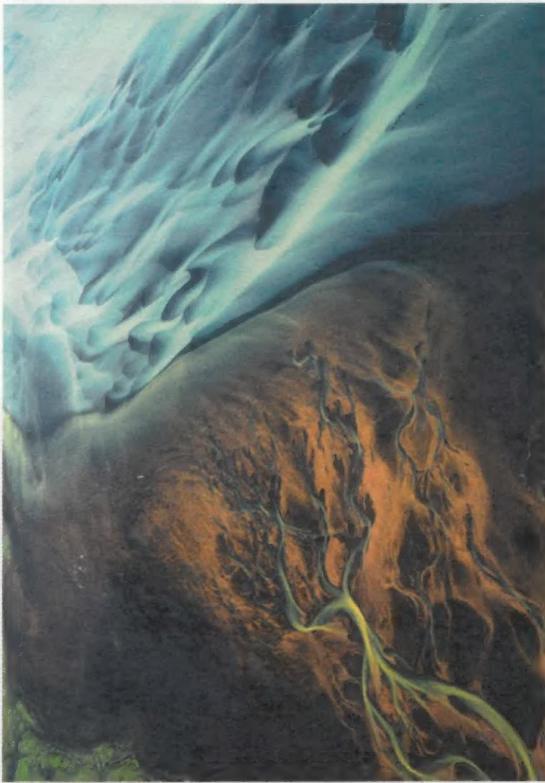
River is a love letter that takes the audience on a journey spanning six

continents and drawing on incredible satellite filming to capture the beauty of the natural world, with narration by Willem Dafoe and music from Radiohead.

It's a film the UK government might want to watch. Last year plans that would require water

companies to reduce sewage discharges were voted down by Tory MPs. That's despite every single river in England failing a pollution test in 2020. On top of that, data shows sewage was dumped into waterways via storm overflow pipes more than 400,000 times during 2020.

Yet none of that was enough for the government to introduce any overarching targets for reducing river pollution in this month's nature recovery green paper. The rivers still need our help.



STORM DAMAGE

How Storm Malik left 100 people locked out of their homes. And there is no sign of them being able to return

● It's two months since Keith McIvor has been inside his Glasgow home – and he and an estimated 100 other households still don't know when they can return.

Residents of the area surrounding the A-listed Trinity building in the Park Circus district of the city were given just 30 minutes to evacuate their homes on January 29 after Storm Malik rocked the UK.

The storm brought 100mph winds and caused power cuts across more than 130,000 homes and businesses, but it also triggered movement sensors in one of the three towers at the building, signalling that it was in danger of collapse.

An exclusion zone was set up across six streets, including McIvor's home across the road. When The Big Issue paid a visit, residents explained they have no idea when they will be able to return. And it's taking its toll both mentally and financially. DJ McIvor (pictured), 54, has lived near the tower for 15 years. As well as his home, the property hosts a music studio and the music collection he has been amassing for more than 30 years.

"My entire life is in that house, my studio is in there, my entire music collection is in there. I didn't work for two years during the pandemic because my

● A hotel that took in around 100 rough sleepers during lockdown is now preparing to welcome Ukrainian refugees – and says it will be giving them the £350 payment it receives as well.

The 70-bedroom Prince Rupert Hotel in Shrewsbury, Shropshire, has signed up to take part in the government's Homes for Ukraine scheme and is urging other hotels to do the same. Managing director Mike Matthews said the hotel plans to give the government's monthly £350 funds directly to any refugees passing through its doors. He wants the money to go to Ukrainian guests so they can access clothes and other essential items once they arrive.

Matthews, who now employs one of the people he took in during the government's Everyone In scheme for rough sleepers, approached his staff about taking in refugees when the invasion began. He said, "Look, this reminds us so much of what we did [to house the people experiencing homelessness], albeit with different circumstances."

"But what can we do to help, as little the hotel in Shrewsbury? There's not much we can do, but look what we did over the lockdown, we transformed the lives of over 100 people. We encouraged other hotels to open their doors as well."

Staff at The Prince Rupert want the country's biggest hospitality brands to follow their lead. Hotel manager Charlie Green said, "There's hotels out there that are virtually empty, there's hotels that are closed. Re-staff those hotels, there's people out there without work, get them back into work."

Hotel chain Premier Inn has 77,000 rooms alone, while Travelodge has 45,000 bedrooms in total. Matthews says if all the medium and large hotels in the country offered up five rooms each it would cater for more than 100,000 refugees.



► The Prince Rupert in Shrewsbury is opening its doors once again to those in need of a place to stay

Overall, 216 million people could be forced to migrate within their countries due to climate change by 2050, according to forecasts from the World Bank.

MUSE



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10TH
MAY

MONDAY
9TH
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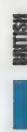
Year 2020

Paul McNamee BSME Editors' Editor 2021;

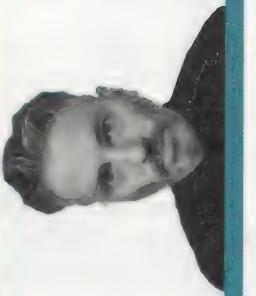
PPA Scotland magazine of the Year 2019,

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Jane Graham PPA Scotland Writer of the
Year 2018

Things may be bleak, but we can find comfort in the toads



George Orwell wondered, given everything else that was going on in the world, was it wrong to take delight in spring

for toad information then two pieces come along at once. I was sent towards George Orwell. He wrote an essay in 1946 titled *Some Thoughts On The Common Toad*. The emergence from their hibernation holes signalled, for Orwell, a return of spring. Orwell felt very positive about this. He went big on his toad love. “A toad has about the most beautiful eye of any living creature,” he wrote. “It is like gold, or more exactly it is like the golden-coloured semi-precious stone which one sometimes sees in signet rings.”

George Orwell knew how to write (not breaking news, I grant you) and he was looking beyond toads. He wondered if, given everything else that was going on in the world, was it wrong to take delight in spring. There were signs of it everywhere, “not even the narrow and gloomy streets round the Bank of England are quite able to exclude it”.

At that point, coming out of the Second World War, the positive impact of the welfare state and the NHS hadn’t appeared yet. But still, so long as hunger didn’t grip, he said, we must allow ourselves to be vulnerable to those delights.

“The atom bombs are piling up in the factories, the police are prowling through the cities, the lies are streaming from the loudspeakers, but the Earth is still going round the sun, and neither the dictators nor the bureaucrats, deeply as they disapprove of the process, are able to prevent it.” While we search for answers, and ways to help those who fear they’ve reached the end of the road and been met with a wall, we should allow ourselves to enjoy the toads, however they present themselves.

Until that point last week I knew nothing of the toads and their appearance, or of their desires. And then, what do you know, you wait forever

Paul McNamee is editor of *The Big Issue*
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"NINA HOSS IS IMPECCABLE."

GLENN KENNY, THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Ingmar Bergman-meets-Joanna Hogg
melodrama of obsession."

JOHN WATERS IN ARTFORUM

"A superb Nina Hoss...
one of the few actresses in Europe
who can match Isabelle Huppert."

JUSTIN CHANG, LOS ANGELES TIMES

THE AUDITION

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BIRD'S WORDS

THIS WEEK

JOHN WILL BE

OUR EXISTENCE IS PRECARIOUS, BUT WE'LL SURVIVE IF WE LEARN TO ADAPT



Reading:
Oceans of Grain: How American Wheat Remade the World by Scott Reynolds Nelson

Watching:
The World at War (1973 series)

Listening to:
Songs of the '60s

Doing:
Taking part in a House of Lords debate on the spring Budget

Is there a way of teaching resilience to people in a world that sees increasing change? I once suggested at a talk with people who worked in a large City bank that the people to model yourself on in the future were the homeless.

They may not always make the right decisions in life, but they have to develop resilience in order to survive. They have to learn to duck and dive, bob and weave like boxers avoiding the punches. If we don't know what jobs are coming down the line in 10, 20 years time then learning resilience, and an ability to respond to challenges, is a good place to put your educational money. Now, with Covid still hanging around and limitations placed on us all, as well as new threats to world stability through military intervention, it seems adaptability is the big issue.

But how can you develop adaptability if you are not challenged? If you are not made to face up to threats? If you are not educated into reality and all of its ugliness so that you can learn to be one step ahead of the game?

Oceans of Grain: How American Wheat Remade the World, by Scott Reynolds Nelson, deals with this theme of unpredictability and mankind's adaptation in the face of threats. Mankind's use of grain to create the model world which has fed more people than ever before. Where empires, which are built around food, are dashed and broken because of the change in food habits.

He describes how the Arab Spring of 2011 largely came about because bread prices were no longer guaranteed in North Africa, due to shortages and the increase in grain prices. It swept away the governments in a rising tide of disdain and anger because food shortages led to revolt.

Vulnerability is endemic in the system and we have been protected from it for decades. But unless we develop skills now, then how can we handle future threats to our stability? How do we toughen up for a time when we may not be able to predict food chains?

Nature, despoiled by pollution, is under threat. World order is under threat by forces that seek to change the balance of power to their advantage. Vulnerability is the new ingredient. And with a world of leaders incapable, it seems, of second guessing the next crisis – which in many ways helps increase our vulnerability – we are at sea. And at such times we should be looking to increasing our resilience to new challenges.

So much has changed in the last two or three years that we are living in a different world. It is a world of challenges but also of great opportunities. Opportunities to break through our terrible dependency on consumerism and entertainment, on distraction and a preoccupation with appearances; the appearance of democracy, where we are more worried about changing words and avoiding offence than

challenging the underlying causes of oppression.

Poverty is the biggest game changer in the world. It is often dressed up in nationalistic or religious rhetoric. But poverty underlies most of our problems and makes people more vulnerable. If we want to sort society out so it is more just and equal then we must sweep away the evils of poverty which rots the very structure of our society.

I am surprised how more preoccupied we are with the appearance of things than with the things themselves. We have yet to wholeheartedly embrace the reality of our environment's degradation. We have yet to tackle the poor thinking that turns even young children into supporters of the vast wealth holders and their social media businesses. We have yet to come to terms with the constant need, it seems, to make merely tokenistic gestures in support of people living in oppression.

Resilience has become a buzzword in government, with their 'Levelling up' agenda. It does not matter to me that the word has become fashionable and has been fetishised in this way. It is important that we move our world into a place where ducking and diving, bobbing and weaving can be the norm. We have to educate people into developing the skills to take on the threats we face around environment and political/military issues. Face up to the fact that, sometimes, guns and bombs can be used to keep people away from threatening your peace.

Most of all we need to inculcate in people the skills to take on challenges, and that cannot be done by bubble-wrapping people. Surrounding them only with others who agree with them. How are they going to become resilient if they only get to know people of like mind?

If I learned anything in my rise out of poverty and crime, it was to take on skills that allowed you to survive oppression and need, want and hunger, violence and aggression. I would not recommend that road to anyone. But I would want to extract from that experience, the experience of millions, that being adaptable and tougher makes good survival sense.

We must throw away the bubble wrap, and extricate our heads from the social media cloud, if we are to survive in this ever-changing world.

John Bird is the founder and Editor in Chief of The Big Issue. @johnbirdwords linkedin.com/in/johnbirdwords john.bird@bigissue.com

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If we want to sort society out so it is more just and equal then we must sweep away the evils of poverty

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RE: FACEBOOK DEBATE OVER ENERGY PRICE RISES AND THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

● We need to bring back manufacturing to the UK, and start by becoming self-sufficient in energy, so industry is not crippled by high energy costs from overseas. And if that means finding new gas fields in the North Sea and fracking, so be it.

Lawrie Howden

● Fracking is so not the answer. Not only is it bad for the climate, harmful chemicals are used, which causes air and water and sound pollution and poisoning the surrounding ground. We have never been self-sufficient, even during both wars when we had the land army and every bit of available land. Even when the country mansions and estates and people's back gardens were used to grow potatoes and vegetables etc, we still had to rely on the merchant navy to bring supplies and still had rationing! The population has increased since then, as have many properties, people have postage-stamp back gardens or no gardens at all, and let's not forget that we once imported over 52 per cent of goods from the EU, and are now seeing price increases and shortages on leaving.

Anmarie Collins

● I think he was referring to energy when he mentioned self-sufficiency. I reckon most would agree that that would be sensible to move towards, regardless of people's knowledge of history.

He mentioned being self-sufficient in energy, which is a good idea in my opinion. I agree that it's been a considerable time since the UK was in that position, but with renewables, oil, gas, coal and modern nuclear powers all available, a move to be self-sufficient in energy is not impossible. So it's not really a ridiculous concept. Some might say it's a very sensible one.

Roy Waterston

Foodbank heroes

This is such a powerful @BigIssue piece showing a day in the life of Britain's biggest foodbank [March 14]. Kudos to all the heroes who work & volunteer @WEFoodbank, and the @mufcfoodbank supporters who help fund it. What a disgrace it is necessary. #RightToFood
@stevecockburn



Hungary for more

I just wanted to say a big thank you because without the vendor in Gillingham, Dorset, I would not have known about the Hungarian street paper in this week's edition [March 7]. The article was so informative, but most important of all, being a Hungarian myself, it meant a lot to myself and my family, so thank you Big Issue. Having a regular vendor in our town is fairly new. Our vendor at Waitrose in Gillingham, Dorset, is a lovely gentle person with a lovely smile on his face. It's always a pleasure to see him and buy the magazine.

Pippa Shillington

Banks statement

It's hardly reassuring to find out that Boris Johnson has such close friendships with many Russian billionaires with KGB links, most of them close personal friends of Vlad (the invader) Putin.

That's why the UK has a debt to the citizens of Ukraine. Not only should we confiscate the bank balances and property of these individuals, we should use the proceeds to fund humanitarian help for Ukrainian refugees.

Stephen McCarthy, Glasgow

Counting the cost

I agree with much of what Helen Krasner writes [Letters, March 7]. However, I would dispute her maths. "You would probably need a deposit of £10,000 which would mean saving for four-five years for a single person etc." Hmmmm, with house prices rising at +10 per cent a year and general inflation heading for seven per cent pa, first-time buyers are caught in a never-ending spiral of rising costs where the goalposts are constantly moving, a modern day Catch-22!

Tim Dedman, Isle of Wight

Saluting Slavi

I thought you might like to see this fantastic picture of my son, James, drawn by Big Issue vendor Slavi. Slavi works from photographs and draws in black and white or colour on A4 and A3. I contacted him recently and he's keen to take new commissions from anyone looking for a really vibrant piece of art at a very competitive rate. I couldn't be more pleased with his work – I've always wanted a portrait of my son and this is just perfect. Slavi can be contacted on ss.slav7@gmail.com

Mei Lane, Dorchester



▼ A portrait of James, by Slavi

UKRAINE EMERGENCY HUMANITARIAN UPDATE



The UN Refugee Agency
United Kingdom for UNHCR

With the war intensifying, there are ever fewer safe spaces inside Ukraine. People are continuing to flee in fear of their lives and the vast majority are women and children. They are arriving at borders shocked and deeply impacted by the violence and their arduous journeys to safety. Today, you could help UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, provide them with a bundle of vital survival essentials.

£86 could help provide a mother and children bundle, containing sleeping bags, blankets, toothbrushes, toothpaste, towels and soap.

Providing mother and children bundles are amongst a number of activities UNHCR is undertaking with regional governments and local partners. In Ukraine, UNHCR teams are distributing prepositioned stocks of relief items in locations across the country. These items include blankets, kitchen sets, jerrycans and solar lamps to support 1.5 million people. UNHCR has also set up additional supply hubs inside western Ukraine and in neighbouring countries at all border areas with Ukraine.

Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, has expressed his thanks and stressed the need for increased humanitarian support.

"I want to thank each and every one of you... for your generosity and kindness in helping people fleeing their homes in Ukraine.

"But this situation is far from over. In fact, unfortunately, I fear that it is just beginning... Families have been senselessly ripped apart. Tragically, unless the war is stopped, the same will be true for many more... Please continue to support however you can. We cannot let them down."

Please show your solidarity with families fleeing the violence. A gift of £86 could not only help provide a mother and her children with essentials, it will also tell them they are in your thoughts and in your hearts.



Olena and her family waiting for a train from Lviv in western Ukraine to Przemysl, across the border in Poland.

£86 could help provide a mother and children bundle containing blankets, sleeping bags and hygiene kits.

Give now at unrefugees.org.uk/ukrainecrisis Call 0800 029 3883, or fill in the form below



I would like to give: £86 £172 Other £ _____

I enclose a cheque made payable to UK for UNHCR OR

I would like to make a donation by debit/credit card

Card no.

____ / ____ / ____ / ____

Date ____ / ____ / ____

Postcode _____

Tick here, if you don't want to receive an acknowledgement by post

Title _____ First name _____ Last name _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email _____

Phone _____

Please tell us if you are happy to hear about UNHCR's work: By email By phone

A minimum of 75% of your gift will directly help displaced families in Europe, funding emergency supplies and other interventions.

United Kingdom for UNHCR is a registered charity in England and Wales (108345).

Please return this form along with your cheque to:

Freepost UK FOR UNHCR (you don't need a stamp)

Increase your donation by 25p for every £1 you donate gift aid it

I would like UK for UNHCR to claim Gift Aid on this donation (currently 25p for each £1 donated), as well as any donations I make in the future and have made in the past four years to UK for UNHCR, until I notify you otherwise. I confirm I am a UK taxpayer and I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand that council tax and VAT do not qualify. If your circumstances change or you have any questions, please contact our Supporter Care Team on **0800 029 3883** or email supportercare@unrefugees.org.uk.

Respecting your personal data: We will use your details to process your donation and to keep you up to date with our work, fundraising activities and other events. You can read more about how we use your data in our Privacy Policy unrefugees.org.uk/privacy-policy. You can opt out of any communications at any time by contacting our Supporter Care Team using the details above.

Scan this QR code to donate online



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency
United Kingdom for UNHCR

P22UAB12



TAKE A STAND FOR REFUGEES

When rockets are firing and shells are falling, you don't have time to queue at an embassy for a visa. You run. If you find a way to get out, you take it. It's safer than staying put.

The terrifying war in Ukraine shows why we urgently need to oppose the Government's new Nationality and Borders Bill. It criminalises some refugees and is being voted on in the House of Commons at the end of March.

Right now, Ukrainian refugees are having to jump through hoops in an attempt to get a UK visa. Under this appalling new legislation, things could get even worse, and a refugee family could be denied help and protection simply because of the route they've taken.



Under these cruel new laws, a Ukrainian family could be punished for seeking safety here.

Instead, people fleeing war, torture and persecution could be shipped off to offshore 'processing facilities'. They would be unable to be reunited with their families or rebuild their lives as part of our communities.

It's our duty to the

survivors of torture

we work with to stand up against this bill. If people are treated as

criminals when they arrive, it adds even more pain and fear to everything they've been through.

Boris Johnson and Priti Patel think the Nationality and Borders Bill is what the public wants.

Today you can show them they're wrong. That refugees and other people seeking asylum, such as survivors of torture, should be made welcome here in the UK.

You can show solidarity with people forced to flee unimaginable horrors like the war in Ukraine. You can be part of an opposing wave of kindness and compassion.

Will you request your free poster and display it in your window for everyone to see? And, if you can, take a photo and share it on social media with the hashtag #refugeeswelcome

Request your free poster – choose one of these ways

Scan this QR code using your phone's camera

OR go to freedomfromtorture.org/poster

OR Text POSTER followed by your name to **78866**

Texts cost your standard network rate. By texting you are agreeing that **Freedom from Torture** can phone or text you to organise sending your poster, tell you about our work and how you can help*

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE
EMPOWERING SURVIVORS REBUILDING LIVES

Torture tries to destroy lives. We won't let it. We stand with **torture** survivors, providing therapy and support, and fighting for change.

*To opt out text NOCALL FFT to 78866.
For our full privacy policy, with information about your data rights, please visit freedomfromtorture.org/privacy.
You can change your details or the way we contact you at any time by calling us on 020 7697 7788 or go to freedomfromtorture.org/dontdisappear

To protect the identity of refugees we use stock photographs.

Registered with **FUNDRAISING REGULATOR**



Registered Charity No:
1000340/SC039632.

Request your free poster and show your support for refugees

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE

#refugeeswelcome

The

BIG ISSUE BULLETIN

What we've done, what we're doing

VENDORS



Giant billboards in London point you towards your nearest Big Issue seller - even if they move around!

The innovative campaign used cutting-edge technology to create multimedia billboards that updated depending on where the nearest Big Issue vendor was on their pitch

- Finding your nearest Big Issue seller became even easier after they were displayed on giant billboards around busy Westfield London pedestrian zones last week. And not only did the vendors feature on the billboard, smart technology meant the digital displays updated to show potential customers where they were selling.

The 'I'm here' campaign works like this: whenever the vendor walks close to one of the digital screens, geolocation technology within their tablet responds, triggering a super-sized version of them on the billboard which then points towards where the vendor is. This lets the local community know when vendors are at their pitch, directing passers-by to pick up their latest copy of The Big Issue. If the vendor is busy, customers will be able to buy a magazine from them through the QR code on the digital screen.

earnings; gave my life structure. I met some really good people and the foundation was instrumental in getting me in and through rehabilitation."

Louise said that selling The Big Issue has improved her wellbeing during the pandemic.

"It's made it much better. I feel more a part of society now I've made friends with nice people and it helps my depression and anxiety. I felt isolated and depressed and I lost a lot of customers and friends. Even now the majority of people are not carrying cash. I'm lucky The Big Issue helped me get a bank account and card reader so fingers crossed things will pick up now!"

Paulo Areas, Chief Creative Officer at Forever Beta, said, "The past couple of years have been challenging for The Big Issue, especially for vendors. Our campaign reminds vendors' communities that they're still here, in the biggest way possible."

"Every vendor becomes a powerful advertisement, increasing their reach and visibility – and letting everyone know that they can buy this week's copy of The Big Issue from the vendor."

Ocean Outdoor Head of Marketing Helen Haines said, "Big Issue vendors are an integral part of our communities. This idea is all about helping them to regain their independence. It's simple, yet brilliant and a worthy winner of our Digital Creative Competition." The 'I'm here' pilot campaign has the potential to be rolled out across more major cities in the UK.

► FIND OUT MORE

bigissue.com



"This has actually been really good, it was a shock seeing myself up there," Lawrence said. "As people walk up they see my handsome mug, and then they see me. Even people who haven't bought The Big Issue [before] expressed an interest. At times people have 'compassion fatigue' as I call it, but this brings it back, it's been really good."

"I want the public to realise there's absolutely no pressure to buy The Big Issue, just have a chat."

Lawrence went on to explain, "The magazine literally saved my life. It halted my slide into full-blown alcoholism; gave me a route to legitimate

Louise and her
billboard (above) and
Lawrence (below) at
Westfield, London

Russell Brand's YouTube channel has 5.3 million (and growing) subscribers logging on for his daily videos on the state of the world. It's a staggeringly successful reinvention that's earning him as many admirers as critics. So why is he so divisive and what exactly is he saying?

'THE TRUTH IS, I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING'



Words: Steven MacKenzie

“Of course the news makes us anxious,” Russell Brand says. “I think you could possibly contest that that’s its primary function. Beyond giving you information about world events.”

In this inconceivably complex world with its webs of deceit and hypocrisy, Brand has rebranded. The 46-year-old stand-up, actor, author has long had libertarian leanings but has metamorphised into a guru for those disenfranchised by what they see as the shady systems that steer the planet and the mainstream media that’s complicit.

On YouTube, Brand posts videos daily pontificating on, if not the big issue of the day, the big issue you’re not being told about. The counter narratives, threats to freedom. The

devilish duplicity of government and corporate leaders. A video titled ‘The Truth Is Coming Out’ asks why it’s so hard to find data about vaccines. Another, ‘You Couldn’t Make This Sh*t Up’, asks what’s really behind calls for military escalation in Ukraine, pointing to members of Congress who recently purchased shares in weapons manufacturers.

Brand’s popularity has exploded in recent weeks. Each video now draws one-three million people every day, and his channel boasts 5.3 million subscribers. He has won devotees of all political stripes and alienated plenty of people too. He’s a hero or villain depending on how much you agree with what he says, labelled ‘the Mad Hatter of conspiracy theories’ by the so-called mainstream media.

Currents are shifting. The audience Brand has built would be the envy of most media organisations. Doesn’t that mean he is now the mainstream? “Maybe the mainstream media, we could say, is a nexus of intersecting interests that are abiding by the same implicit and sometimes explicit codes; where there are ownership models that are possibly biased and influence the nature of their reporting,” he answers.

“This is stuff that’s been spoken about from Chomsky onwards, but has become – oddly, given the availability of information – more concentrated. “I suppose it’s part of, at bare minimum, a triumvirate of establishment power: the media, government, big business.”

How would you fix it?

“I don’t know, is the short answer.” ▶



The longer answer takes in fixing society in its entirety. "Decentralisation, devolution, where possible. What I mean by that is more assemblies, more juries, more control over your own workplaces, schools, hospitals and communities."

"In one word: democracy. Actual democracy, not democracy on a blade of fear and desire.

"Democracy where you look at the full gamut of possibilities of the ways that we might live. Accepting that tradition has to be observed at the same time as progressivism, where some people want to raise their children gender neutral and other people want to raise their kids double Orthodox, and both of those perspectives are going to have to be respected, otherwise we're going to live in continual tension.

"I feel like we need to bring spirituality to the forefront of our politics. What I mean by spirituality is what I would call *Sesame Street* values: kindness, service, community. The values and morals our grandparents had." Brand is a talented communicator. He's always had a way with words, which either delight and enlighten or flummox you into submission.

Google his name and this is top of the suggested queries that comes up: Is Russell Brand intelligent?

In every video he is at pains to say he doesn't have all answers, instead we're encouraged to ask questions. Is your definition of intelligence knowing that you don't know everything? "No, my definition of intelligence is *the* definition of intelligence, which is the ability to observe patterns. David Beckham is intelligent because he knows how to spot patterns. Stephen Hawking is intelligent because he knows how to spot patterns. Piers Morgan is intelligent because he knows how to spot patterns. This is necessary for our species to evolve. If you can

I feel like we need to bring spirituality to the forefront of our politics. What I mean by spirituality is what I would call *Sesame Street* values

two, but three opinion columns from the same publication. He responded to them in a video called 'My Response' decrying the title's Saudi ownership.

Do you think that was establishment collusion at play or just different commission desks not talking to each other?

"I don't know. What do you think?"

Speaking from experience, it's more likely colleagues not communicating rather than orders from above to take you down.

"It's probably just a coalescent set of interests that always head in that direction," he says. "Like if your sponsors all come from a particular place, the ad revenue is all driven by data capturing from the readers, you don't need to do that. It's like, once someone's playing for Liverpool, you don't have to tell them not to score a goal for Everton!"

LOOK INTO MY EYES'

recognise patterns, whether it's migratory behaviours of quarry, the movement of currents or the sun across the sky, you will be at an advantage and your genes will survive. Now in evolved, advanced primates such as us, intelligence can become more refined: linguistic, mathematical, geopolitical.

"That is a definition of intelligence that I enjoy because if you have the basic skillset of being able to observe patterns, it doesn't allow you to classify certain types of information as valuable and others as not valuable. Although context is everything."

Isn't some information objectively more valuable than other information? In a vaccine-related video uploaded the day before this interview, he said: "Follow your heart, follow your intelligence, follow whatever information appeals to you." That could act as a signpost directing viewers from healthy scepticism to confirmation bias and onwards down a slippery slope to conspiracy. There has been increasing criticism of Brand's content. In the past few days, he had been the subject of not one, not

Brand has a squad of defenders. The latest signing Elon Musk tweeted to his 78.7 million followers: "With so many mainstream media companies saying @rustyrockets is crazy/dangerous, I watched some of his videos. Ironically, he seemed more balanced & insightful than those condemning him! The groupthink among major media companies is more troubling. There should be more dissent."

Those comments were welcome. "As Elon Musk kindly observed," Brand says, "I'm being accused of being radical and dangerous. You can look into my eyes and see if you think I'm telling you the truth."

And Brand is completely genuine. But truth is complicated.

That's why he encourages people to ask questions. But if we've to be distrustful of the established establishment, where do we find answers?

"Obviously it would depend on the question, hugely. I wouldn't say this is as simple as, 'why don't you look for a new news source?'



Reaching out: Brand's probing videos have attracted millions of followers looking for an alternative to mainstream media

"Think about how the way you live today is connected to what you evolved for. Because when you came out of your mother, that infant was expecting to be living in a hunter-gatherer tribal society. Everything that's happened to it since has been a jarring shock. And the psychological consequences you are experiencing are the result of that.

"This body and this consciousness evolved to survive in certain conditions for hundreds of thousands of years. We lived in tribal communities that broadly speaking, as best as I understand it, were to a degree democratically run. Everyone wasn't sitting around threading daisies through their hair; there was a lot of problems, people

were doing human sacrifices and flinging people off pyramids and all sorts of stuff. But we recognise that our identity as individuals, while sacred and important, intersects meaningfully with our identity as a member of community. “You can map that onto communities of 30 or 150 people. When you map it onto communities of 60 million or 300 million there starts to be a little bit of tension. Some of the cultural issues would not be so spiky if people didn’t think we all have to be homogenised into one unit.”

I agree with what you say in some of your videos, I disagree with others. What’s a constructive way to disagree with someone who has different opinions?

“I reckon just to communicate.

Sometimes, like anybody, I get attached to my opinion and my view, and I can get defensive or argumentative about it. But the truth is, I don’t know anything. “I do videos all the time, I go, ‘yeah, I said that – that weren’t right.’ It’s hard enough to just be in a family and to look after the dog properly. I don’t think I know the answer to complex geopolitical issues with rich and contradictory and complex histories.

“We should communicate with one another from a position of good faith, accepting that other people might know stuff that we don’t know, and hopefully vice versa.”

How do you decide what to talk about each day?

“I have a team of people and we just talk about what’s in the news,” he says, explaining that the team has differing political views – “we don’t agree on some pretty fundamental things” – and that content is aimed at a growing audience based in the US.

When did America start awakening to you on YouTube channel?

“I don’t know. But I try to keep things as universal as possible.”

Planning a US tour any time?

“Not planning but I might do one. A friend of mine, who also is married into the royal family, said that other than the Queen of England, I was the most English person she knew. So, like, I belong here.

“I’ve got kids and dogs and cats and stuff. I like it here. It’s hard enough going to Hull or Plymouth or Bristol... That bloody great big, sprawling, blocky continent. I’m sure I will go.”

Brand is currently part-way through a UK tour, named 33 – the age Brand didn’t think he’d live past. It begins with the audience sharing some of the mad ways they coped with lockdown before Brand retraces the already surreal seeming period of our history, taking at least one positive from it. “You now know society can be radically



If you’re not willing to have conversations with people you disagree with, who are you going to have conversations with?

like you always have to go for the counter narrative? Is sometimes the real narrative not compelling enough?

“You said ‘real narrative’. I’ll remind you what Chomsky said to Andrew Marr when Andrew Marr said, no one’s told me what to say: “What I’m telling you is that if you didn’t agree with what they wanted you to agree with, you wouldn’t be sitting in that chair.” Often we don’t even know. We just unconsciously say, ‘real narrative’.

“That’s an ideological thing and not an accusation, by the way. But what I will say is when we’re selecting the content, we don’t go: ‘What’s on the news?’ – because that’s on the news.

“It’s not to negate or to say ‘that’s just not true’. Because if there’s been a pile-up on M25, there’s been a pile up on the M25. If there’s been some terrible devastation in a war zone, there’s been terrible devastation in a war zone. What else might be relevant in the way we discuss these things?”

What is the consequence of only consuming counter narratives? I don’t know if your audience is also watching Clive Myrie on *News at Ten*.

“Based on what I read in the comments they come from a wide and varied background with a wide and varied set of interests, probably like people that are watching a football match, or a makeup tutorial, or anything. If you’re not willing to have conversations with people you don’t agree with, who are you going to have conversations with?

The people that you love most in the world you disagree with all of the time. “Surely our aim is to get to a point where we operate in good faith. Like, I’m going to love this person and see if we can, through open communication, get somewhere together.”

Russell Brand is now on tour across the UK
russellbrand.com/live-dates
@stevenmackenzie

BRAND DEVELOPMENT

Born in Grays, Essex on June 4, 1975, Brand started out as a bit player in shows like *The Bill* and performing standup. His first job as a presenter was for MTV in the year 2000, but found fame hosting *Big Brother's Big Mouth* from 2004.

Controversy went hand-in-hand with his growing notoriety. Numerous scandals, relationships and addiction issues made him tabloid fodder. He went to Hollywood, married a pop star (Katy Perry) divorced a pop star and somewhat reset. Married again with two children, now he is “interested in change... awakening”, which he explores in books, podcasts and live events.

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The girls are back for one final series. The show's creator Lisa McGee reflects on making such a joyous, life-affirming show amid the gloomy backdrop of The Troubles in '90s Northern Ireland – and how ultimately hope wins out over fear

DERRY GOOD FRIENDS

By Adrian Lobb

What a ride it has been. More than six years have passed since we first encountered the Derry Girls. And now Erin, Orla, Clare, Michelle and James return for one final series.

The show is a work of supreme skill. Lisa McGee has created one of the funniest programmes on television, exploring the intensity of teenage friendship while rewriting the rulebook on depictions of life during The Troubles and educating the rest of the UK about life in Northern Ireland in the 1990s. That's some achievement.

This is a series that stays with you. Watching troubled times through teenage eyes, reminding us that joy and innocence are nothing if not persistent. Scenes replay in the mind. Particularly the girls dancing to Madonna in the school talent show at the end of series one, while, at home, their families watch coverage of a devastating bomb attack in horror. Two parallel existences in one place at one time, as *Dreams* by The Cranberries fades in.

The final series is set in the months before the Good Friday Agreement. These are monumental times. The Derry Girls are getting their GCSE results. And there has been a change in government, with Tony Blair coming to power – and, importantly, Mo Mowlam taking over as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Not only is hope coming into the picture for the adults, but the Derry Girls are – slowly, very slowly – becoming more politically aware.

"Mainly it's just very stupid," says McGee, who is keen to stress the show's daft comedy as well as its socio-political impact.

"But in series one and two, politically, there was all this stuff going on in the background that the adults knew about and the Derry Girls were very protected. In season three, they're going to have to grow up. They're getting older and they're going to have to have some political awareness and social responsibility. It's about

Photograph by Adam Lawrence

them realising they're going to need a view on things. Because a lot of being a teenager is that you don't really know who you are and what you really think. I don't think this is a spoiler, but it's about them coming face to face with something that's difficult and they don't all agree on. We don't leave them these enlightened people by any means – but they have a little bit of growth."

Because of pandemic-related delays, the series will end around the time of the 25th anniversary of the 1997 UK election. It seems prescient, just as the last series dropped while Brexit was straining the Good Friday Agreement. "We've always been quite fluky that we've landed at times, politically, when there was stuff going on that related to the show," says McGee. "Also, what that gap allowed is it was a kind of cult show around the world and in America. So many people have discovered it that the global audiences are waiting for it as well now." ▲



Michelle, Orla, Erin, Clare and James return for one last season

McGee remembers this time well. Like the characters she created, she was more aware that everything around her was politically charged by the time of the 1997 ceasefire and the Good Friday Agreement the following year.

"It was in everything you talked about and so there and so present all the time," she says. "There were literally soldiers outside on your street – on the street I grew up in anyway. They would be kneeling down outside houses.

"And there was a paramilitary presence. A lot of complicated stuff was going on, but you just went, 'this is life'. When you think about it now, it is so nuts. Like the Catholics' relationship with the police and the fact that most of them wouldn't have been comfortable phoning the police if something happened. You certainly couldn't have had them come into your house. There's layers and layers of this stuff. I remember the ceasefire being a massive deal. And then the Good Friday Agreement being a massive deal."

And after the Good Friday Agreement? The realisation of exactly what she had been living through, largely carefree, as teenagers are wont to do.

"I would describe it as like ghosts disappearing. There were less soldiers. And then there were less. And then they were gone," she says. "But there was no great, 'this is the day they're going.' Then the police uniform started changing and they had a different name. It was all done so slowly. Then suddenly, it was very different."

Only then did she realise what was at stake, and why we must never go back.

"I was never really scared growing up. Which is weird. But then I got scared about it going back to that. Because after the Good Friday Agreement, I obviously knew it was a lot better," she says, a quick laugh at the memory.

Mo Mowlam makes a fleeting appearance in episode one, via the television, like so much of the archive footage and political background does in the series. I wonder, who are McGee's personal heroes of the peace process?

"Definitely John Hume is the big one. And Mo," she says. "Then there was a political party that doesn't exist any more but was very important at the time, called The Women's Coalition.

"It sounds cheesy, but anyone who was trying to find the middle ground, for me, and put themselves in the firing line. Which John Hume did time and time again. And Mo. They were heroes. I don't know if it is just rose-tinted glasses, but I think we had real heroes in those times. It was tough times. It was crap. But we had these amazing people that you could look up to, who made you think about what you were doing and how you could contribute. I don't know if they exist now. They were one in a million. We were lucky to have them."

During lockdown, McGee returned to live in Belfast after 12 years in London.

"Because it was the pandemic, it was just not going out in Belfast as opposed to not going out in London," she says, adding that her kids love it.

These are exciting times for the city. "It's exciting to have a film called *Belfast* nominated for Oscars. It's an amazing thing," says McGee, though she admits she has not yet found time to watch Kenneth Branagh's film. "I love Jamie Dornan and I love Caitriona Balfe so I just feel like I love it, even though I have yet to sit down and watch it."

McGee is deep in the edit for the final episodes. But she is starting to consider the impact of the series, on her, on her community, on the wider television landscape. She was, she says, able to find the funny and explore the lives of the Derry Girls because of her deep knowledge of the time, the place, the people.

"Comedy is a different beast. You have to have the right, sometimes in order to take the joke where you need to take it," she says. "Because you are maybe going to push it somewhere that is uncomfortable. Only you can maybe judge how far you can take that joke.

"I say this a lot, but the one thing I knew early in my writing career is that I was never going to write about The Troubles. Never. I was so over it. But when I watched depictions of it, I felt they were writing about somewhere else. It didn't look to me like where I came from. There was no colour. Or humour. Or women a lot of the time.

"I used to always say that there are other stories to tell. But you can't get away from that backdrop. I tried for a long time, as a writer, to kind of erase

From top: Mo Mowlam and John Hume; McGee on the set of series three; Siobhan McSweeney as Sister Michael; the Derry Girls. Opposite: Kathy Kiera Clarke, Louise Harland, Tara Lynne O'Neill, Saoirse-Monica Jackson and Jamie-Lee O'Donnell



'The main feeling is relief'

McGee has always known how she wants the series to end. "The miracle is that they have been able to finish the show on their own terms – a rarity in

television, where shows are cancelled or go on past their sell-by date, victims of their own success.

"I'm really thrilled we've ended it that way," she says. "The main feeling is relief, because we got to finish the show the way we wanted to against all the odds. We're a small show that's just punching, do you know what I mean? We wanted to have this scale and ambition and really go for it. And then Covid happened. It was a nightmare at times. But I'm very proud of it."

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So it is that this story, celebrating teenage friendship and mischief and misadventure and passion, came to be. It feels, again, timely, to be celebrating the resilience of young people at a time when they have been enduring such a rough time, kept apart from their friends and away from their schools for long periods.

"Writing *Derry Girls*, I've realised I really like teenagers. I love their hope," says McGee. "They get a bad press, but they do make the best of everything. You could see that through the pandemic. I started following a lot of young comedians who were doing TikToks. I found them very inspiring. They got, in many ways, the roughest hand. But they just cracked on, didn't they? I love that energy of young people. We get so tired and over everything and negative, you know? They haven't had the joy stamped out of them yet, I guess."

I want to be that window of joy'

Derry Girls returns in the wake of another project close to McGee's heart. She worked with actor Peter Mullan on *Skint* – a series of BBC Four monologues about poverty, written by people with lived experience of being poor. Is that, I wonder, the direction she is heading in next? Nope.

"My next idea is one of the silliest things ever," she grins.

"But one of my favourite elements of *Derry Girls* that is from personal experience is when they discovered they're poor. Because that happened to me. It was a discovery. Because everyone was poor. That was my friends. So I loved that idea that they went, hold on a minute, we've been dealt a shit hand. And even that



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THE LAST HURRAH

Saoirse-Monica Jackson (Erin), Jamie-Lee O'Donnell (Michelle), Nicola Coughlan (Clare), Louisa Harland (Orla) and Dylan Llewellyn (James) on filming the final series

NICOLA: It was delayed three times, which was insanely stressful. There is such a long gap that there's a fear you'll go back and not know how to play them any more. But the characters are just there. They lie dormant in us. The moment you step on set... It's all mental muscle memory.

SAORSE: We were just relieved to make it to that point and relieved that none of our storylines had to be compromised.

DYLAN: I feel like *Derry Girls* has been a lesson about Ireland to the British because we don't get taught about The Troubles. *Derry Girls* has shown the world the things that happened, but it's also great having female-led comedies. I'm proud to be part of it, proud to be a Derry Girl.

LOUISA: Young friendships are that intense. My best friends from school are still my best friends today. It is crucial.

NICOLA: It's that time in their lives that's really heady, they are really involved, and it does show the resilience of young people. What's going on in the background is so insanely difficult but their lives and their little dramas are the most important things to them. They have such innocence in the face of terrible things.

LOUISA: The people of Northern Ireland never lost their ability to laugh, and they never lost the importance of family. It is a true depiction of the time - through a certain lens, of course.

NICOLA: I got the job when I was 30. Getting that script was like getting a little piece of gold. And then for it to have been such a hit the way people connected to the story – it's a massive privilege. We might be done playing the characters, but we'll always be Derry Girls.



Derry Girls returns to Channel 4 in April.

Watch series one and two on All4 now

@addey70

JAMIE-LEE: It's overwhelming to have led a show that's Irish people, that's Derry people, that's women. It's something I'll always be proud of. If people remember me as Michelle, that would be my life made.

SAORSE: I feel like I've grown up with Erin. And I still can't come to terms with the idea of saying goodbye to her.

NICOLA: I love when something has a beginning, middle and end. So it's sad. And it is bittersweet. But I feel like I've put on Orla's Doc Martens for the last time. I just want to leave it as it is.

WILL YOUNG

The singer felt fame was inevitable, and then discovered that life doesn't mean anything. But he's OK with that

My main preoccupation at 16 was basketball. I also loved art and music. I started doing a lot of my own art, inspired by what I saw when my grandmother took me to the Royal Academy. And I started watching a lot of MTV, particularly Trevor Nelson's show. It was all about R&B pop for me – D'Angelo, Mary J Blige, Aaliyah. I would find a place in our sitting room to dance and watch myself in the mirror, singing into a hairbrush. So, I was already a narcissist. And, oh, I was so beautiful. Such a pretty boy.

I was very content, really, in my own world – I think because I wasn't engaging with my sexuality. That was definitely a conscious decision.

Probably because I was at boarding school, so most of my time I was just among boys, and I didn't feel safe enough to be open about my sexuality at that stage. So, I didn't come across those complications. I was quite happy just being in the countryside, doing my art, playing basketball and listening to music. And I had my twin brother, so I had my best friend with me.

From 16 onwards I really started to blossom. I was finding my confidence and my humour. I always knew I was going to be a singer, but it was a very private, internalised desire at first. Then I went to university and joined a Footlights society, so I was singing a lot. I also started singing in a barbershop quartet with my friends. Then I started recording songs onto MiniDisc and sending them off to different competitions. But I didn't know what to do next. I did enter a boyband competition and won it. I got on TV for that, on *This Morning* [in 1999]. But, even then, I just felt frustrated. I was doing musicals, but I didn't want to do musicals. And I didn't want to sing in a group. And I wasn't writing my own music at that stage. It was like having this amazing gift, but not knowing what to do with it.

I always knew I was really good. It's weird, because I was so unconfident in so many other areas, but I knew I was a really good singer and I'd be a pop star. Doing *Pop Idol* live was the first time I'd ever sung with a handheld microphone with reverb. That was just amazing – a very liberating, self-affirming experience.

And I knew I was going to win. I remember posting the entry form and saying to my friend, I think I'm going to win this.

I don't remember the moment on *Pop Idol* when they announced the winner and said my name. It was quite hard on that final show [in 2002] because I had to sing two songs that I really didn't like. So that kind of



1995 THE YEAR WILL TURNS 16

Bombay is officially renamed Mumbai

eBay is founded by Pierre Omidyar

OJ Simpson is found not guilty of the murder of former wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman

took the shine off. But I still wanted to look really grateful, and not seen snobby or up myself. It wasn't that I didn't enjoy myself, but I was just like, oh, god, you're going to have to bide your time here. I was quite good at being political and I knew how lucky I was, so I accepted that it was going to be a bit of a waiting game before I could do my own thing.

I only remember one moment during the show, when I was singing *Light My Fire*, and I looked up and saw Annie Lennox in the audience. That was really cool because I was a massive fan. I met her beforehand and she said to me, "Fuck them, fuck them all!" I loved her. And afterwards the first person I saw was my friend Claire. Apparently, the first thing I said – so she tells me – was, "think of all the free parties we're going to go to!"

I think the younger me would be absolutely fine with everything that's happened to me since I was a teenager.

He was quite cool and relaxed. He knew who he was. He was a cool dude. I'm envious of the simplicity of his life. OK, there are lots of difficult times when you're

young, you've got hormones and all these things rushing around. But, really, you don't care about all that nonsense. No one can buy what a teenager has, which is... they don't give a fuck. While you've got youth, you don't give a fuck. I spent a long time trying to come back to who I was as a teenager, before life got complicated and I came across death and heartache. For many years I wanted to return to that time in myself and I think I have managed to do that now. So, I remain young and curious and content.

It wasn't until I went to university that things started catching up with me. Things like repressed sexuality. Abandonment issues. I remember falling in love with someone and

getting very low about that. And there was definitely a pattern to do with relationships. Life started to bite me in the ass a bit – the effect of having gone to boarding school from a very young age. I didn't really understand that until I was about 26. That's when I started having therapy.

It was difficult when the papers started writing about my sexuality, but it wasn't the main event in my life. Being famous is not the main event. And I knew that. It was frustrating and complicated and boring, but I was just thinking, who gives a shit about this? I wouldn't read the papers – I wasn't really engaged in that way. And, luckily, there wasn't social media then. So, it made my life a bit more difficult, but I didn't have deep trauma from being famous.

The most important thing I've learned about life is that it doesn't mean anything. It's all nonsense.

Once I learned that nothing had any worth, everything had worth. It's the classic kind of Buddhist thing – I unattached myself from life. The process of learning that lesson is dramatic, because it's a breaking-down of everything we're told. And that is traumatic. It's like, what do you mean, getting a bigger car isn't important? What do you mean, my house isn't an extension of me? Who am I then? But going through that thinking process is necessary to reach an enlightened state on life. When I worked out that nothing really matters, I found really simplistic joy in everything. Through unattaching from everything, I've reached a deeper level of connecting to things. Attaching to love can be based on dependency, a survival instinct, or a fear instinct. Connecting to love is based on a healthy, equal enjoyment. I just imagine that I'm on a river and life's just tottering me along.

Like everyone else, I do fear loss. **Rupert, died in 2020.** I don't have children but the closest I have to losing a child is my dog getting run over last summer. It was the most traumatic thing. It was horrific. And it just sort of sits there, the pain. It's not affecting me day to day, but it's there and it's awful. It was just so instant. One minute, I've got my dog with me, the next minute she's gone. That's it – it's that bleak. I'm looking at my dog and she's dead and I'm like, what the fuck? If I could meet anyone from my past again I'd like to just hang out with her. To be with Nellie one more time, to just have her on my lap, that would be lovely. But then it would be really sad when she went away again.

If I could go back to any time in my life it would be this amazing moment, a very spiritual moment when I was 17. I woke up very early one morning in Cornwall and I cycled to this beach called Dana Bay. It was very peaceful, and I just sat on my own listening to Joan Armatrading, thinking. And I had a sort of moment. I suddenly felt very at one with life. Some people would say it was almost a calling. And it was brilliant. Remarkable. I'd love to experience that again – just because it was so much fun the first time around.

Will Young's 20 Years: The Greatest Hits album is out on May 27, and tours the UK in October and November: willyoung.co.uk

Interview: Jane Graham @Janeannie

'I ALWAYS KNEW I WAS A REALLY GOOD SINGER AND I'D BE A POP STAR. I KNEW I WAS GOING TO WIN POP IDOL'



► 1999 Competing in *This Morning's* boyband competition. He won a place, but the band failed to find success

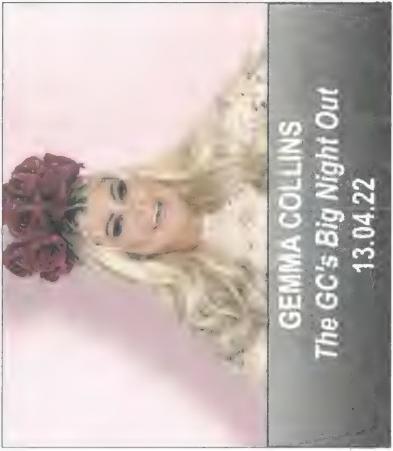


► 2002 With hosts Ant and Dec on *Pop Idol*. After his triumph, Young's pop star dreams came true

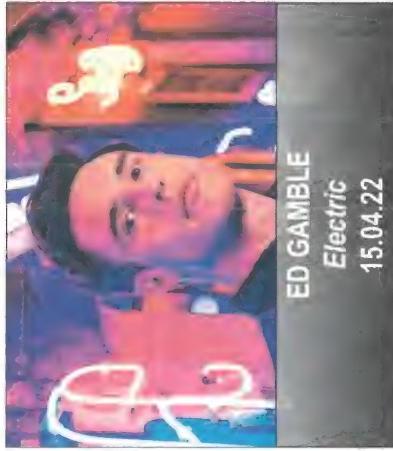
► 2005 Playing Bertie in the Oscar-nominated movie *Mrs Henderson Presents*



MARTI PELLOW
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GEMMA COLLINS
The GC's Big Night Out
13.04.22



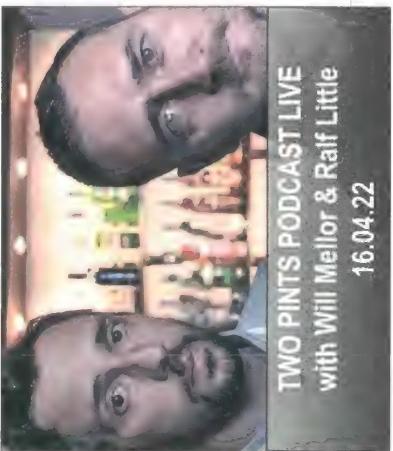
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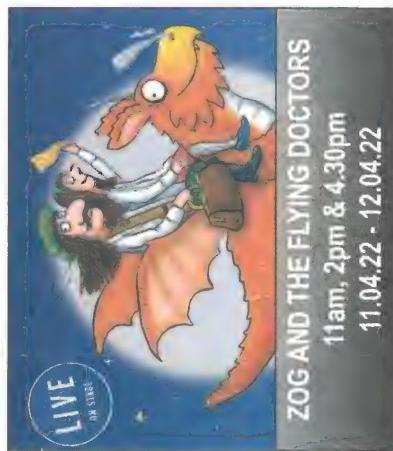
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The Dating Show
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FILM

Whether 'good or 'bad', Tom Burke's acting CV makes us think
Sophie Monks Kaufman

INTERVIEW

In *Top Boy* it's the female characters who carry the show
Saffron Hocking

MUSIC

From The Beatles to basics, the different ways of making music
Malcolm Jack

FOOD

Calories are set to appear on UK menus – but is this a good thing?
Sofia Antonia

CULTURE

STREET ART ART4UKRAINE

Art4Ukraine is a specially curated collection of photographs taken inside Ukraine over the last several years by a group of contemporary local and international art photographers, depicting a side of the country the world needs to see and remember right now. Ukraine before the Russian invasion – a free, peaceful and beautiful European nation with hopes and dreams, passions and indulgences like any other, even with war tearing at its

fringes. The collection has been curated by The Print Space in London, who are selling prints of all the photos featured, with profits going to Choose Love and War Child to aid the growing refugee crisis.

The image pictured was taken in 2016 by Dnipro-born, now Warsaw-based Ukrainian photographer Yulia Krivich as part of a series titled

Daring Youth. The project dissected

the image of a young Ukrainian man

called Igor, who was already a war

veteran by the age of 22 after volunteering to fight in the Donbas region. Igor's Instagram didn't look any different to that of other 20-somethings – trainers, tattoos, fishing trips and holidays to Disneyland – but for the occasional snap of tanks, weapons and destruction in eastern Ukraine.

The Art4Ukraine print sale runs until April 5 – view and purchase prints at art4ukraine.com



The work on this page is created by people who are marginalised. Contact street.lights@bigisuse.com to see your art here. To see more and buy prints: bigisuseshop.com. At least half of the profit goes to the artist.

INTERVIEW

Music has often been regarded as men's work'

Sinead Gleeson
talks to Kat Lister

When the artist and writer Julianne Huxtable first discovered the American jazz singer Linda Sharrock, she was "firmly in the 'psychedelic era'" of her life. "I am convinced Linda's renderings found me," she writes in *Praise Poem for Linda*, an essay that doesn't just pay tribute to one woman's croons, but also draws us into the "masterful eruption of unmistakably Black expression." Sharrock is, for Huxtable, a virtuoso in a long line of Black female vocalists who, despite being forerunners of the avant-garde, have largely gone uncredited. "An essay is never about a singular subject, it's always about a lot of things," says writer, editor and broadcaster Sinead Gleeson during a Zoom call from her home in Dublin. Take Huxtable's praise poem, for instance. "I love that essay," Gleeson says. "You pick it up and learn something new about a woman

doing incredible things with her voice, outside of language, outside of sound. Few have heard of her, and Sharrock is nearly 75 now. "Maybe people reading this book will change that a bit."

The book we're discussing is a collection of essays about the female experience in music, *This Woman's Work* – a nod to Kate Bush's 1989 song – which is edited by Gleeson and her collaborator, Sonic Youth's Kim Gordon. Decades after seeing Sonic Youth play in a sweaty club in her teens, Gleeson was asked to interview Gordon at a retrospective of her work in the Museum of Modern Art in Dublin. Gordon, fresh from writing her memoir, *Girl in a Band*, was looking for a partner and found one in Gleeson, an editor who describes the act of essay commissioning as "gold-digging".

This essay collection is, at its heart, about uncovering voices. "Can you imagine any woman in music who would get a nine-hour *Get Back* type-thing made about them? Kate Bush, maybe. Aretha Franklin, possibly," Gleeson muses as we discuss the ways in which women have been sidelined in a traditionally male-coded industry. Music has often been regarded as "men's work". How conscious was she of not coming from a wholly defensive position, I ask – because that would be easy to do, wouldn't it? "Absolutely," Gleeson replies. "And that's the nub of it, really. There's so much worth celebrating."



*This Woman's Work:
Essays on Music*
edited by Sinead
Gleeson and Kim
Gordon is out on April
7 (White Rabbit, £20)

And celebrate it does. From Megan Jasper's innovative work with the grunge label Sub Pop, to Kim Gordon's collaborative friendship with Japanese noise-rocker Yoshimi Yokota, to Zakia Sewell's *Hearing Voices*, a moving love letter to her mother's vibrato, "a ghost, immortalised on tape". Reframing narratives from a female gaze, no genre is left unturned over the course of these 16 essays, taking us from trap and drill (Gleeson calls Simone White's deep dive into these subgenres of hip-hop "brilliant and challenging and not like any other essay in this book") to folk and country, to jazz and electronic.

There are the musicians we know (Ella Fitzgerald), the composers we may recognise (Wendy Carlos) and the unsung innovators we're yet to meet (Maggie Nelson introduces us to the Mexican-American singer-songwriter Lhasa de Sela). "Even Rachel Kushner's essay about Wanda Jackson isn't just about her," Gleeson explains. "It's about America at a certain time, it's about how you don't have to stay in the same place musically or spiritually."

As Gleeson points out: "Sometimes by virtue of being female you're considered not as authoritative as a male voice, whether you're a writer or a musician." Maybe Kraftwerk and Brian Eno knew about Wendy Carlos's groundbreaking work, Sinéad muses in her essay on the reclusive synth pioneer, but there's a wider point to be made, and that's about the paying of dues. "I'm so concerned for her legacy because she's withdrawn from the world," Gleeson says. "I wanted to shine a light on someone who was such a genius and yet under-acclaimed."

Music writing can often be bogged down in the writer's preoccupation with what they know, yet these essays are written from an endearing, full-hearted perspective of fandom, written with empathy and joy. "I love the idea of someone like Anne Enright being a fan girl," Gleeson says. "Anne Enright is as cool as a cucumber, so the idea that she was almost unable to speak around Laurie Anderson makes me smile so much." As the Texan composer Heather Leigh reflects in her introduction to this book, our joyful experience of music is full of contradictions, irrational feelings, which we all surrender ourselves to. "*This Woman's Work* asks probing questions that strike at the heart of such contradictions," she writes. And, in doing so, "a symbiotic relationship develops between these writers, the music and the reader" that brings the in-between notes alive. "Fall under its spell," she dares. "This is music returning to music."

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@Madame_George
Illustration by Mary Flora Hart



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Sophie Monks Kaufman

PROFILE

The indefinable allure of Tom Burke

Wootliff's **True Things**, a romantic drama set in the seaside town of Ramsgate, 'Blond' (Tom Burke), fresh out of prison, shows up at the benefits office where Kate (Ruth Wilson) works. In the same breath as signing on, he asks her out. It's not long before they are fucking against a concrete wall in a nearby car park. His magnetism draws from Kate not just her clothes, but her responsibilities. She soon enters freefall; neglecting work, relationships and sanity.

Burke does layered work. Beneath the confident charisma that he uses to seduce Kate is an opacity, so that when he switches from hot to cold, it makes perfect sense. We don't really know this man. He holds onto the mystery of a character who does not have a name for that matters less than his narrative function as a siren. Through a psychological dance of seductiveness and cruelty, he draws out the self-destructive choices this woman is willing to make for a taste of passion.

February saw the release of *The Souvenir Part II*, Joanna Hogg's second instalment of a memoir about meeting her first love while she was a film student in 1980s London. Hogg is recast as 'Julie' (Honor Swinton Byrne) while her first love is 'Anthony' (Burke). He was an older man with upper-class poise who said he worked for the Home Office. And he was a junkie who robbed her flat and died of a heroin overdose at the end of part one, so *Part II* is about grief. Part one, however, catapulted Burke into international consciousness with his seamless blend of charming romanticism – he sends Julie magnificient love letters – and selfish detachment. He holds her at arm's length in order to protect his habit.

One reason that Anthony is able to pull off a double life is because he

Tom Burke's mysterious 'Blond' has a magnetic but troubling effect on Ruth Wilson's Kate in *True Things*

presents as an assertive man of the world in contrast with Julie's faltering babe in the woods. Hogg enhanced the quality of this dynamic by showing Burke a map of the story, whereas Swinton Byrne was plunged into things scene by scene. Talking to me for *Little White Lies* in 2019, Hogg explained why she cast Burke. She said, "Anthony is, in a way, an actor. You don't know if he's performing or not. I sometimes cast non-actors but it felt right that Anthony was played by an actor – a man who's in control and sort of directs life. So it was completely right that Tom saw the map of where we were going."

Directing life with a sexually dominant energy links Blond and Anthony with Freddie, the RAF pilot Burke played in the National Theatre's 2016 production of Terence Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea*. In 1950s London, Hester (the late, great Helen McCrory) leaves her stable and passionless marriage to a High Court judge to live with Freddie, whose waning interest drives her to a suicide attempt. Burke is as hot as Hades and just as cruel. The role of Freddie hinges on an actor's capacity to rage with sexuality one minute, and scorn the next. When he flares with the former, Hester's submission suddenly makes sense. Who could resist someone so very alive.

A healthy respect for life-force flows through Burke's decisions. As our culture wrangles with whether certain characters are "good" or "bad" his actorly presence harnesses the fact that what moves us are qualities that are much harder to define and grasp.

True Things is released on April 1
Sophie Monks Kaufman is an author
and freelance film journalist
sophiemonkskaufman.com

Film

Illustration: KYLE HILTON / Photos: PICTURE HOUSE ENTERTAINMENT

assurance oozes out of his every pore. Women may get hurt, but it's not his fault. He didn't ask them to fall so hard. His face is one you couldn't mistake for someone else's. A cleft lip elevates ordinary handsomeness to something more distinctive. This is Tom Burke, the 40-year-old actor from Kent and godson to the late Alan Rickman, who has built up a body of work characterised by a captivating ambivalence. As the online film discourse squabbles over whether depiction equals endorsement – most strikingly in the case of Paul Thomas Anderson's age-gap romance *Lionie Pizza* – Burke quietly persists with playing slippery and complex characters.

In David Fincher's *Mank*, he played Orson Welles, a tidy piece of casting as he has an old-world swagger that scans as confidence in all aspects of the humanity he performs. Good, bad, why would it matter? Value judgements are less important than the ring of truth. There is an emerging theme to the truths he brings to light.

Our culture has a tendency to weaponise female beauty, per the noir trope of the femme fatale. Male beauty can be just as dangerous. In Harry

Hocking who, along with Little Simz and Jasmine Jobson, delivers an outstanding performance.

"I think the women come out on top," says Hocking. "They are not just there to facilitate a male storyline. They are the storyline. They have the most important stories."

Rising star Hocking plays Laurny, part of a cast whose performances are emotionally charged, sensitive and vulnerable, their chemistry electric. Hocking says it's down to their close off-screen relationships.

"We all love each other. The dramas on the show are non-existent in real life."

Laurny was last seen fleeing for her life after passing secrets about Sully (Kane Robinson) to his rivals. In the eight new episodes she is key; vulnerable, pregnant and involved in an abusive relationship with her boyfriend Curtis (Howard Charles).

This is one of several important social issues explored this season – and it could not be more relevant or timely.

"I think *Top Boy* is so popular because it's real," Hocking says.

"It covers social issues that people can relate to – it's not just gang, gun and drug culture. There are storylines such as homophobia, deportation and child abuse issues in there with mine about domestic abuse.

"Laurny, bless her, she's having a real tough time. She's been shunned from Summerhouse and left to her own devices – and the only thing she can do is try to survive. She looks for love in the wrong place and ends up in a terrible, toxic, horrible environment.

"She's pregnant, so it's not just about her any more. I think we all make mistakes in life when we're young – everyone does, but you can grow and learn from it. Laurny is forced to grow up and realise that her mistakes don't just affect her now, they affect her future child. So the stakes are incredibly high, which is why she has to get out of this situation in order to save herself. To save her unborn child."

Recent research shows that between April and June 2020 there was a 65 per cent increase in calls to the National Domestic Abuse Help-line. In 2021, there were 845,734 crimes linked to domestic abuse recorded by police.

Hocking did not take her portrayal of a domestic abuse victim lightly. As soon as she read the script, she realised it came with a big responsibility. She contacted Refuge, an organisation that assists those who have suffered.

"I could never have foreseen or imagined how supportive they ended

Saffron Hocking



'TOP BOY IS SO POPULAR BECAUSE IT'S REAL'

Words: Nashwa Mustafa

 Crime, loyalty, power and violence are the themes that run through *Top Boy* and have turned it into a global hit. But it nearly ended after two, albeit acclaimed, seasons on Channel 4. It was saved by Canadian rapper Drake, who helped resurrect it on Netflix where it resurfaced in 2019. And now the highly anticipated fourth series has finally landed after a three-year wait. While in previous seasons the lives of male gang members in the crime-filled Summerhouse estate were at the heart of the show, this time women are at the centre of some vital storylines, according to Saffron

up being. They educated me, advised me," says Hocking.

"I didn't want to treat this as an entertaining storyline. I wanted to treat it as something that I can invest in to showcase the harsh reality of people's lives and what they go through. If one female watches *Top Boy* and realises 'Ah OK, I can relate to this – this isn't right. I need to get out of it' then that would make me happy."

Hocking says the role has opened a rollercoaster of emotions she's never felt before – including a profound compassion for victims of domestic violence.

"I tell the story with as much truth and honesty as I can, but I can walk away from that," she says. "Whereas there are women and men who wish that they could walk away. They wish it was all just acting for them, but they live in the harsh reality, that's their life."

"That was quite harrowing for me. I just felt terrible that this is people's reality."

In April 2021, Hocking took to Twitter to express her solidarity with women who spoke out against Noel Clarke as allegations of bullying and sexual misconduct were levelled against the British actor. She emphasised the need for solidarity and for women to speak out.

"Men must be allies, they must support us if you see any form of injustice or something you don't believe. You must speak up," she insists.

"The other day I was on the tube and this man was sort of being a bit inappropriate with me, leaning into me, coming a bit too close and then doing it to another woman. A gentleman stepped in and said, 'Listen, I'm watching what you're doing and I'm not liking it – leave the girls alone.'

"You know, we could speak for ourselves, but just knowing that there was a fellow human being there, let alone a man, that stood up for us and had our backs... that's all it takes."

The new series of *Top Boy* is available on Netflix now

ROBIN INCE IS ON THE ROAD



well with my timetable, but Carlisle is the end of the line in all directions. I stand on the platform, staring at the indicator board as though it's a magic eye picture, hoping that eventually the words "cancelled" will be transformed to "five-minute delay".

I am both determined and powerless, so I resort to my one course of action, tweeting frustatedly.

Helen, who owns all the bookshops I am visiting today, thinks she can pick me up if she can find one clear road.

I dawdle around Carlisle. The whole town seems hungover. I see four hangdog men pushing pushchairs disconsolately. Whoever they were on Friday night, they are not any more on Saturday morning.

Helen arrives in a small red Fiat that is an apt rebuttal to all the great big boxy cars that dominate the roads. We take the scenic route close to Hadrian's Wall and slalom around the fallen branches. We pass Sycamore Gap, a tree that stands beautifully alone between the roll of two hills.

The bookshop in Corbridge is a former church. The preservation order on it means that the pulpit must remain and I stand in it to sign books. The many clerics on my family tree would be happy now. A local optician who is unable to attend has left me some lovely local chocolates to make up for any post-hurricane anxiety.

We move on to the Biscuit Factory, a Newcastle art gallery with a smashing cafe that is just open enough for salad. Sadly, Whitley Bay has been battered, the streets are full of broken glass and the top of the seaside clock has been blown off. Helen decides to postpone tonight's gig. She gives me a

**The whole town seems hungover.
I see four hangdog men pushing
pushchairs disconsolately. Whoever
they were on Friday night, they are
not any more on Saturday morning**

Patti Smith book to keep me company. Now I have a night alone in Newcastle.

I am too tired for a Saturday night. I reckon I could have managed a Tuesday, but Newcastle may just be too darn vivacious for me, alone in my specs and duffel coat.

I lock myself in my hotel room with a bag of peanuts, a bottle of wine and the last of my luxury chocolates. I listen to Saturday night build; street singing echoes off the sky.

Today, I am visiting three shops in the northeast. The 8.22 to Carlisle is running 70 minutes late, that fits



Hooking's character is pregnant and suffering domestic abuse in the latest episodes of *Top Boy*

Robin Ince is an author and broadcaster
@robinince

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Music

Limitations
can be freeing
and focusing
for artists



Malcolm Jack

PODCAST

After The Beatles comes The Mess

Beatles album *Let It Be* appeared along the bottom of the screen and, without anyone present perhaps even realising it at the time, they captured lightning in a jar.

Every song you've ever heard and loved is the product of a process not unlike the above. And yet, how often are we even remotely conscious of it as listeners? Practically never. And with good reason – quite apart from boring most people stiff, it would only shatter the illusion.

But if you're someone with a possibly masochistic curiosity about the human and technical methodology of music making – and your love of *The Beatles: Get Back* may be a useful gauge of this (I could easily have watched another 468 minutes and more) – the process can be revealing and intriguing all in itself. It's one of the reasons why I'm enjoying catching up with the award-winning podcast *Excuse the Mess*, following the recent release of a two-volume compilation of music created during the making of it, via Stroud-based contemporary classical and avant-garde record label, Hidden Notes.

Dating back to 2018 and 2019, respectively, the two series of *Excuse the Mess* saw musician Ben Corrigan – the podcast's creator, host and in-house composer – spend a day each with 17 unique voices from the contemporary classical world, including Hannah Peel, Anna Meredith, Oliver Coates and Gold Panda. He not only interviewed them about their lives and work to date, but also created a piece of music with them, to the same set of

Of all the things I loved about Peter Jackson's documentary series *The Beatles: Get Back*, and I loved practically everything about it, the thing I think I loved most was this: the way in which it managed to explode the mystique and romance of music making, and yet somehow still leave us feeling like we'd witnessed true magic.

Music making, as anyone who has ever tried it knows, is a process and not simply an end product. Never does a song or a composition ever come to anyone completely fully formed, without the requirement at least for some tinkering and fine-tuning (*Yesterday* did not wholly come to Paul McCartney in a dream, despite what legend might tell you). What *Get Back* made engrossingly and enchantingly – if also sometimes patience-testingly – clear over 468 minutes, was that even for the greatest band ever, music making was lots of very humdrum things, done over and over again – such as the following, in no particular order.

It was gibberish placeholder lyrics, half-formed riffs and chord sequences and wonky vocal harmonies, traded, repeated and refined in a strange, intuitive language which only the musicians involved could really understand. It was copious cups of tea and cigarettes. It was at least one person being too bossy (Paul) and someone else goofing off all the time to ease the tension (John). It was stroops (George) and the occasional fart (Ringo). It was all of these things, round and round, day after day, until the moment and the chemistry and the stars all aligned, and suddenly the words "this version featured on The

three pre-defined rules. Firstly, they had only one day to make their composition; secondly, they couldn't pre-plan anything; and thirdly, every sound had to come from one instrument only, which the composer brought with them (they could, however, manipulate the material electronically).

It was a way of scaling the music-making process down to miniature and spontaneous form to help us wrap our heads around the various ways different musicians approach it. "The individual building blocks, workshopping of ideas and discussions that went into the music is revealed," wrote Corrigan. "A rare opportunity to learn how these musical minds function."

There was Hannah Peel, with her signature, joke shop-bought, hand-cranked, miniature music box, making resourceful use of even the hole punch needed to make holes in the paper roll that feeds the music box to create a percussive loop. There was Anna Meredith manipulating and exploring the resonating pitch of, of all things, a pesto jar. There were no stroops nor bodily emissions captured in any of the sessions that I'm aware of, although there was a lot of strange intuitive language spoken (Meredith: "The squareness is more apparent at the start. How about we focus it?") and it seems as if a lot of tea was definitely drunk.

Now available to buy via the Hidden Notes compilations – lovingly presented as stylish packages together with limited-edition books featuring podcast quotes, photos and Risograph prints – the 17 tracks written and recorded as part of *Excuse the Mess* stand up as a fascinating and very enjoyable collection all in their own right. Proof, perhaps, of how sometimes limitations can be freeing and focusing for artists when their abundance of creativity might otherwise leave them lost in the process for too long.

Excuse the Mess
podcast host Ben
Corrigan makes
music with a pesto jar



ILLUSTRATION: KYLE HILTON / PHOTO: RAPHAEL NEAL

The *Excuse The Mess* compilations Vol 1 and Vol 2 are available at excusethemess.bandcamp.com; Listen to the *Excuse The Mess* podcast via [@MBJack](http://stmpodcast.com)



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Food

We currently have a broken system, where unhealthy foods are cheaper than healthy foods

Sofia Antona

COUNTING CALORIES

What's the difference between a banana and a packet of Wotsits?

It's not long until we'll be met with shrieking across the Five Guys counter: "1,509 calories for a large fries?!", when out for a fast food treat.

From April 6 restaurants and food businesses with 250+ employees will be mandated by law to display the calorie content of food and drinks items on their menus.

With 63 per cent of UK adults overweight or obese, and an accelerating rate of children leaving primary school overweight, this radical legislation forms the latest government bid to tackle the obesity epidemic. But what are the pros and cons of this legislative approach?

Not all calories are equal

The upcoming legislation focuses solely on the calorie content of food and drinks. Calories (kcal) are a measure of the energy content of food, and counting them is a simple way to track how much we're consuming.

Having easy access to nutrition information is essential to helping individuals make informed food choices. However, solely concentrating messaging around calorie counting as a weight management tool to help the population track their food intake may be short-sighted.

Calories consumed via a head of broccoli compared to those from a block of butter have vastly different

nutritional compositions. And so they will have distinctly different impacts on the body, from influencing your level of satiety to impacting the trillions of microorganisms that make up your gut microbiota. Calories from different food groups are also metabolised differently and so have different caloric availability – meaning the number of calories displayed next to a dish on a menu won't technically represent the number we can utilise in our bodies, nor does it represent the quality of the calories we're eating – whether these come from fibre or fat.

This is a key notion behind Dr Giles Yeo's book *Why Calories Don't Count*, which stresses how we should consider the types and quality of the foods we're eating, as opposed to just fixating on its energy content.

Focusing on calories bypasses conversation on the macronutrients, vitamins and minerals essential for our body's health. For instance, a banana and a packet of Wotsits have the same calorie ranking. One of these contributes to your five a day, provides fibre and essential vitamins and minerals; the other contributes very little besides a sprinkle of flavour enhancers and salt.

There is a concern that calorie signposts will overshadow messaging around health and the nutritional quality of the foods we're choosing to eat.

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Law and disorders

With children and teenagers set to grow up eating in restaurants using calorie counts, the incoming legislation should be supplemented by the introduction of updated and strengthened food and nutrition education within schools.

Growing up acknowledging and utilising calorie information may be extremely effective for the health of future generations. However, we are currently passing down a broken food system, where unhealthy foods are cheaper per calorie than healthy foods, and dining out is to be framed around calorie counting and constructs of weight management, which is disconcerting.

Further education for the wider population will help individuals navigate and tailor calorie information to their own health goals to drive clear, constructive changes in food behaviour. Displaying calories on menus is also set to have a destructive impact on those living with eating disorders. It's estimated that around 1.25 million people in the UK are currently living with an eating disorder. Anorexia nervosa has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric disorder. Simply stopping for a morning coffee will now subject those suffering or recovering from an eating disorder to a distressing and detrimental environment.

The regulation is set to be disruptive, whether it produces a beneficial impact or not. As a public health initiative, providing individuals with point-of-purchase nutrition information is promising in shifting food behaviours and allowing more informed decisions when eating out. But it will undoubtedly have various negative effects on millions of individuals with eating disorders.

The promotion of overall health (both physical and mental) and the quality of our diets is arguably of greater importance than the number of calories we consume. As Dr Yeo said: "If you focus on health, your weight will take care of itself."

Sofia Antona is a nutritionist and food blogger, follow on Instagram @softabakes



Sofia Antona is a nutritionist and food blogger, follow on Instagram @softabakes



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Watch Out For The Threads

Five years ago I was looking for someone to help run Southdown Duvets which resulted in me meeting and interviewing Anne. I am pretty sure she went away completely bemused because I told her there was no job description, no dress code, no routine but she needed to watch out for the threads.

"What threads," she almost gasped, looking quite alarmed.

"Difficult to explain," I responded, "just wait and see."

Five years on, I am always amused when I hear Anne say: "Oh my giddy aunt, look at this thread!"

Threads reveal themselves intermittently in various forms. For example, we might suddenly get a clutch of orders from completely unrelated customers but all with the first name Val. Or we get 2 orders whose post codes are perfect anagrams of each other. Or we might not sell an Emperor size duvet (7ft x 7ft) for months and then suddenly we get 3 unrelated orders from different parts of the country. Recently we got an order from a customer with the surname Waddington. Not a common name but sure enough within a couple of hours we had another order from a customer by the name of Woddington. One letter difference and surely it cannot be purely co-incidence? And then of course I had two lovely cottage guests, unrelated but both named Barbara. They stayed at Primrose Farm within 2 weeks of each other and both, completely unsolicited, knitted me a woolly hat.

I am convinced that within my lifetime some genius student will crack the mathematical code which describes, explains and possibly predicts these threads thus forever changing our lives.

But in the meantime, we all need to acknowledge that somehow we are all interconnected by some invisible force of nature and our mutual and collective attitudes and actions impact others somewhere and in some way. The good and the bad. And that is why we should all be doing whatever we can to support our extended yet apparently unrelated families in the Ukraine.

Jessica





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cadwyn.co.uk

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Hours: 22.5 hours per week

Holidays: 22.5 days per annum including Bank Holidays and fixed days

Location: Newport Citizens Advice

Duration: Permanent

Closing Date: 5.00pm on Monday 11th April 2022

Interview Date: Week commencing 25th April 2022

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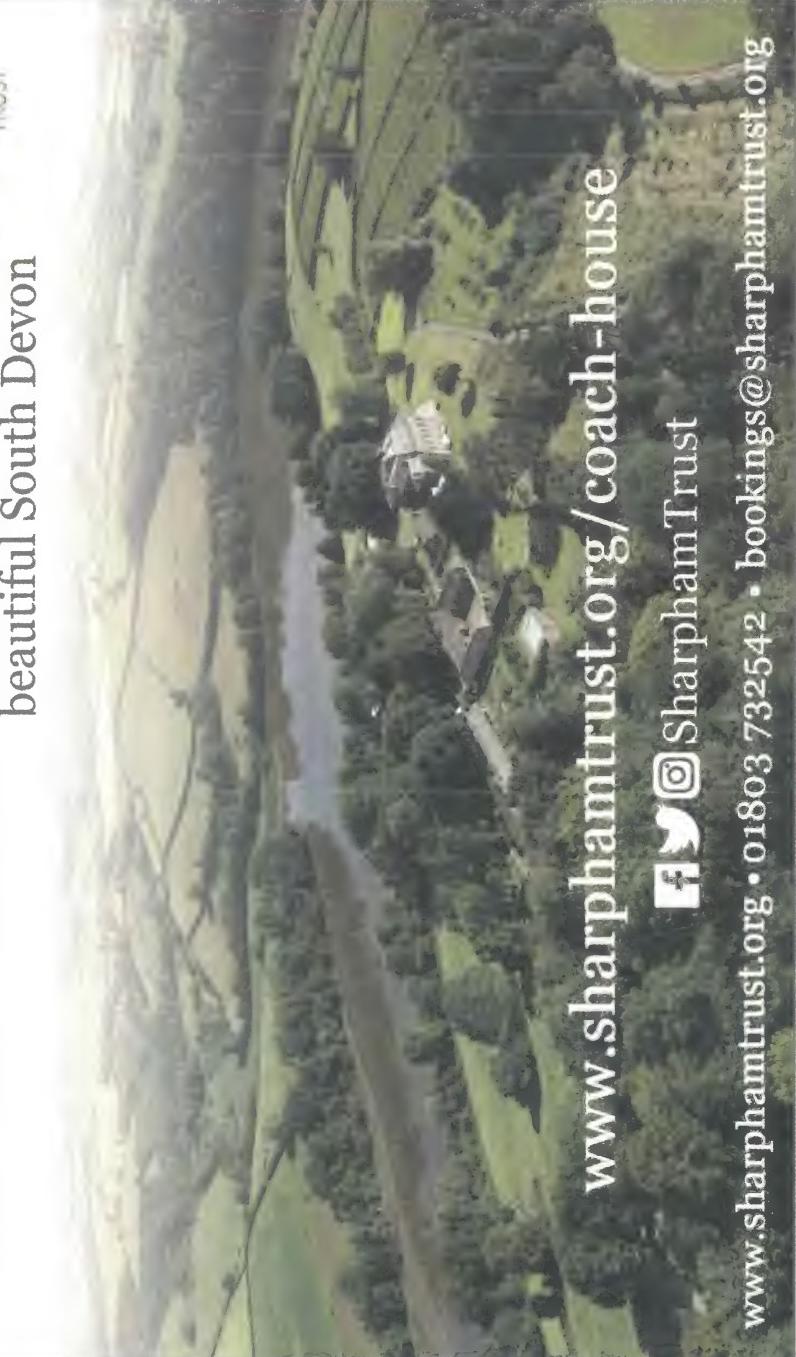
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Puzzles

Crossword

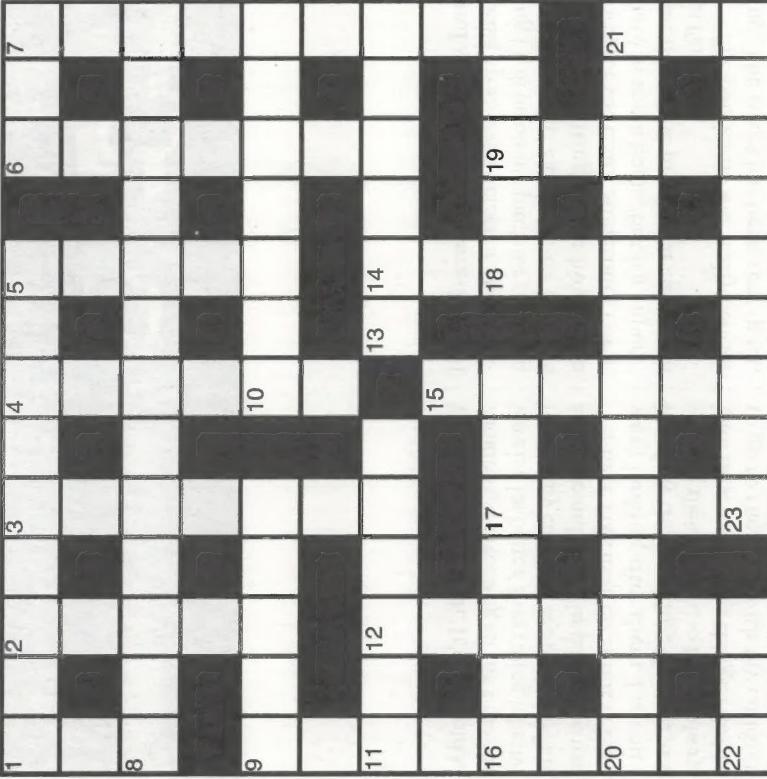
CRYPTIC CLUES

Across

1. Stating in other words that one is producing more mine perhaps (9)
6. Dry part of the housecoat (3)
8. Partition early in the day (7)
9. Many a prefix to be used (5)
10. Walls "Hi" discordantly in an African language (7)
11. Nasal sounds of grats moving round the point (6)
13. The way journalist at the centre declared (6)
16. Original games site in London? (7)
18. Many Londoners hide material (5)
20. No longer like teacher - become mad (2,3,4)
22. Secure a draw (3)
23. Confirmed bore (9)

Down

1. Beast stuck in the trammelines (3)
2. Henry finding alternative inside every sixty minutes (5)
3. Pole in a bad way is going by water (7)
4. Eat as a joke, we hear (6)
5. Find Irish officer on the lake (5)
6. Pen left by first dress designer (7)
7. Continued cooking coriander (7,2)
9. I considered it to be bad grammatically, it seemed to me (9)
12. Still some extra (3,4)
14. Suit tan designed for a hot country (7)
15. Is able to be heard in French resort (6)
17. Breathes short gusts of wind (5)
19. Be situated at home and stay in bed in the morning (3,2)
21. Flop up and down (3)



QUICK CLUES

- | Across | Down |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Demoted (9) | 16. Branch of maths (7) |
| 6. Bitumen (3) | 18. Ornamental loop (5) |
| 8. Decline in quality (13) | 20. Leave unaware (4,2,3,4) |
| 9. Irish (anag.) (5) | 22. Couple (3) |
| 10. Heat (7) | 23. Horticulture (9) |
| 11. Immature insects (6) | |
| 13. Contort (6) | |

Sudoku

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	2	1	3						
4		5							2
		6							8
			8					4	5
				1					
					4				
7					9		2		
						6			
							6		
								9	

ISSUE 1505 ANSWERS



CRYPTIC:

- Across - 1Inquiries; 6Laes; 8Aether; 9Deadline; 10Starboard side; 11Shear; 13Wigs; 17Service charge; 20Parterre; 21Bush; 22Leer; 23Telexing.
Down - 2Nicety; 3Unearth; 4Rodeer; 5Sparrow; 6Lits; 7Canada; 12Accurst; 14Gearbox; 15Menage; 16Eggs on; 18Elfin; 19Inept.

QUICK:

- Across - 1Grandeur; 6Able; 8Adam; 9Holyhead; 10Guided missile; 11Aer; 13Huff; 17Equestrianism; 20Caffeine; 21Show; 22Shur; 23Bathered.
Down - 2Radius; 3Nomadic; 4Ephod; 5Raleigh; 6Athos; 7Liable; 12Rotting; 14Finesse; 15Squash; 16Aslope; 18Elfin; 19Inept.

Win

The first correct drawn entry to the crossword will win a copy of this week's random book selection,
Chilean Poetry
Alejandro Zambrano

Send entries to:
Crossword Competition,
The Big Issue,
43 Bath St,
Glasgow, G2 1HW

7	4	9	8	1	5	2	3	6
1	8	6	9	2	3	4	5	7
3	2	5	7	4	6	8	1	9
8	3	2	4	5	9	6	7	1
9	6	4	1	7	8	5	2	3
5	1	7	3	6	2	9	4	8
4	9	8	2	3	1	7	6	5
2	5	3	6	8	7	1	9	4
6	7	1	5	9	4	3	8	2

MY pitch

*Outside the Lion and Lamb,
Farnham, Surrey
Wednesday to Saturday 9am-4pm*

MONICA, 30

I like it very much in Farnham. That's not because I sell more magazines here – sometimes in the last few months I've only been able to sell about 10 – I like it in Farnham because there are good people here who are very kind to me. They speak nicely to me and even if they don't buy a magazine they are pleasant to speak to – and all of my customers have a very nice heart. They really make me happy when I'm feeling sad. They are very special people to me.

I've been on my pitch in Farnham for eight years, before that I was selling in Alton for around four years but I found that a lot of the shops were closing, so I decided to move. I still go there every now and again.

As well as buying the magazine, my customers get me a hot chocolate when I'm out in the cold and sometimes buy me treats like sweets and chocolate. I particularly want to thank my customer Vicky, who buys the magazine from me but also helps me with sweets for my children as well as paper and paints for them. It's really nice to have her help.

In fact, one of my customers even put me forward for this interview about my pitch – so thanks to Harvey. People like him in Farnham make me feel very happy.

I live in Croydon but I have to get the train to my pitch, which can be expensive. I could sell the magazine in Croydon, but I like it in Farnham too much. What time I get to my pitch depends on the train from Croydon because it is often delayed



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and sometimes it's cancelled. If I wake up at seven o'clock in the morning I will be on my pitch for nine, but sometimes it can be 11 or 11.30 as I can be waiting for an hour, even two, for the train. Sometimes I even have to come home. But it's important that I have my regular customers in Farnham.

The pandemic was really bad for me. The street has been very quiet, and sometimes customers have said to me that they are not going to buy the magazine. Sometimes it was only Vicky who would buy one. It has meant that sometimes I have had a few issues left over. But it is getting a little busier now.

I moved to the UK from Moldova 15 years ago. I really like it here and I don't miss Moldova much, even though I have family over there who

I keep in touch with. It's too cold in Moldova, it's freezing all the time and here is a lot better. Everything is better here – my children are well, they are safe here and that is important to me.

I have six children and it is hard work looking after them. I spend a lot of my time cooking, cleaning and washing their clothes, so I don't always have time to do other things. I do like to go to the park with my children when I can. I am lucky because I have a lady who can look after them and that means I can go to Farnham to sell the magazine.

I sell the magazine to support my children, and my dream for them is that they have a life that is better than mine.

Interview: Liam Geraghty @LGeraghty23
Photo: Exposure Photo Agency

URGENT UKRAINE APPEAL

Millions of people have been forced to live in damaged buildings or flee to safety. ShelterBox aid could be lifesaving in times like these.

Warm winter clothes, shelter kits with tools, hygiene kits, solar lights and water carriers can help people survive in damaged buildings; or your gift could buy mattresses for people who fled to collective centres in western Ukraine.

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£590

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OR my own choice of £

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Expiry date:

Issue no.:

Gift Aid is only valid if you give your details below

Signature(s):

Today's date:

D M Y

Title: Forename:

Surname:

Home address:

Postcode:

Email:

Yes, you can contact me by email

You are always in control of how you hear from us and you can change your mind at any time by contacting us on **0300 0300 500** or **privacy@shelterbox.org**. To find out more about how we safeguard your data, visit **www.shelterbox.org/privacy**. If you do not want us to write to you by post about our work – and how you can help us stay ahead of the next disaster – please tick here:

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